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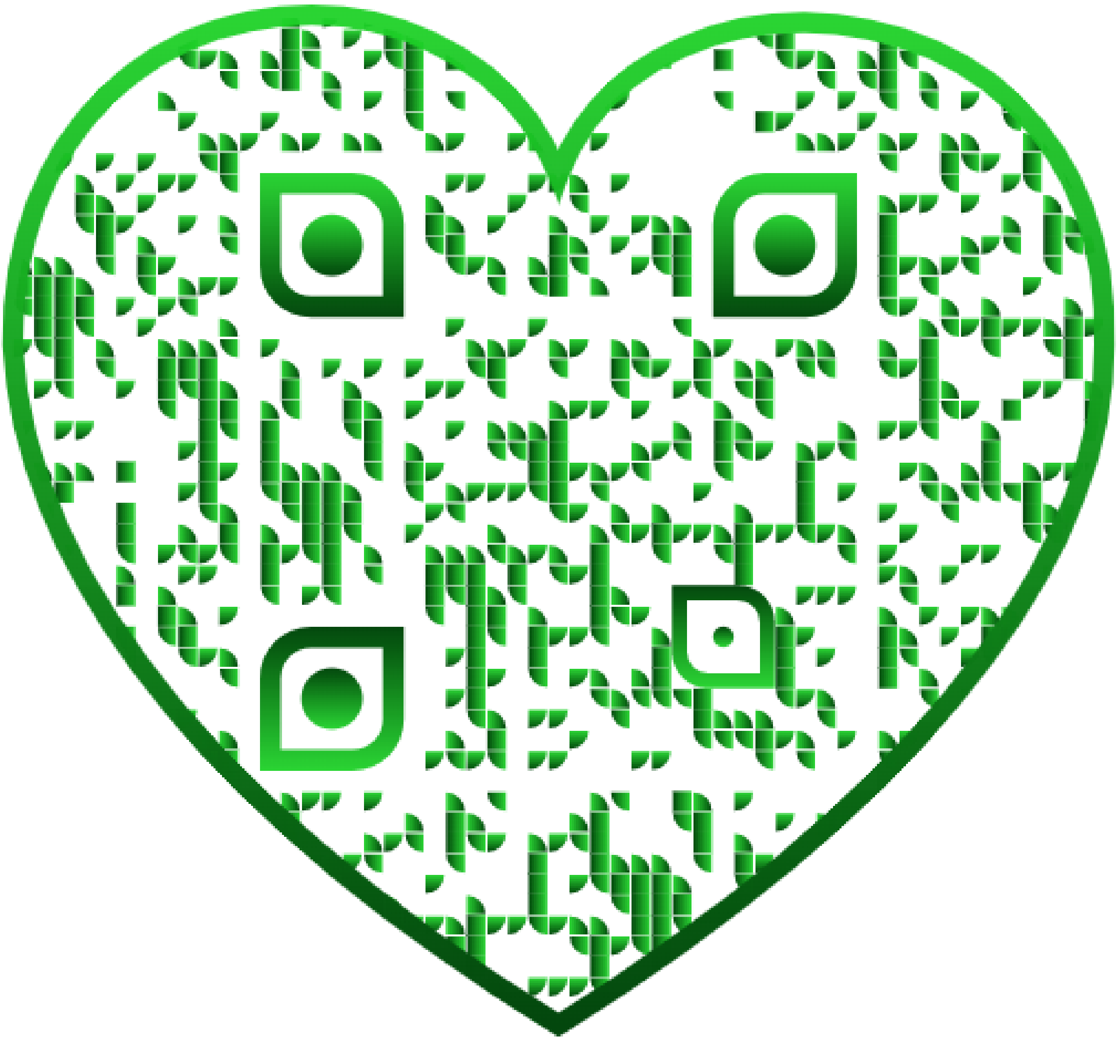
STORY OF WORLD WAR II

THE EVENTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT SHAPED THE WAR

Digital Edition

THIRTEENTH EDITION

FUTURE



STORY OF WORLD WAR II

World War II left an indelible mark on almost every corner of the globe and millions of people on it. In **Story of World War II**, you'll discover how the hostilities had their roots in the rise of fascism across Italy and Germany and how this toxic ideology positioned itself as a bastion against the threat of communism in the Soviet Union and Asia. You'll also explore how Japan's fear of this rising red tide, its thirst for modernity and need for a position on the world stage drove it to annex swathes of territory and pick a fight with the world's first superpowers. Next you will discover how the resulting massive and multistranded conflict inspired technical innovations, new and often underhanded tactics and some of the world's bloodiest ever battles in a war that revolutionised what combat meant to the military, the political establishment and civilians. Finally, learn how the fallout from the 20th century's darkest chapter still drives conflict around the world today.

Contents

WWII Origins

6 **Mussolini's Fascist Italy**
How fascism originated in the fractured states of Italy

8 **Collision course in the Pacific**
Japanese imperialism set the stage for war in the Pacific

10 **Inside the Nazi state**
Hitler's rise to power and the evils he enacted

16 **The destruction of Poland**
The invasion that took Europe to war

Key Moments

18 **The miracle of Dunkirk**
The Little Ships that could – and did – save Allied lives

22 **Hitler's holiday tour from Hell**
When the Nazis tried to destroy Britain's most beautiful towns

30 **An allegiance with the enemy**
How Stalin switched sides to preserve the Soviet state

34 **Spies that won World War II**
The secret army who helped Britain defeat the Nazis

44 **Enigma**
How some unassuming British academics cracked the code

52 **Japan's first strike**
The deadly strike on Pearl Harbor that brought the US to its knees

Battles of WWII

60 **Battle of Britain**
Discover how Britain's flying aces beat off the Blitz

64 **Battle of Stalingrad**
The bloodiest battle in history was fought over Stalin's city

68 **D-Day**
When the massed Allied forces stormed the beaches of France

78 **Iwo Jima**
Vengeance for Pearl Harbor, or a necessary tactical masterstroke?

86 **End game: The fall of the Third Reich**
The Red Army rushed in, and Nazi Germany crumbled

Key Figures

96 **Churchill**
The making of Britain's most iconic wartime leader

106 **Franklin D Roosevelt**
The safest pair of hands for America at war

110 Joseph Stalin: The Man of Steel
The complete story of the cunning communist leader

114 Axis of evil
How the Axis Powers united to conquer the world

End of an era

124 Mussolini's downfall
As his Rome fell, Il Duce attempted to escape

134 Adolf Hitler's suicide
Faced with defeat or death, the Führer chose the latter

136 The first atomic bomb: Hiroshima
An eyewitness account from the Enola Gay's navigator

140 Liberating the death camps
How the Allied liberators uncovered the Holocaust

142 Bringing the Nazis to justice
A new kind of war required a new kind of war crimes trial

144 Origins of the Cold War
When WWII ended, a new war of ideas was rising to take its place

Mussolini's Fascist Italy

Combining fear tactics and a well-oiled propaganda machine, Mussolini's totalitarian Fascist state became the first far-right dictatorship in Europe, pre-dating the Third Reich

In 1861 the Risorgimento united the Italian Peninsula into one country. Led by nationalist revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi, it unified Italy for the first time since the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. The centralised government in Rome was led by a number of liberal coalition governments in the early 20th century. The most prominent politician of the era was Giovanni Giolitti, a staunch liberalist who served no fewer than five terms as prime minister between 1891 and 1921. After the outbreak of World War I, Italy initially favoured neutrality but later sided with the Triple Entente on 23 May 1915. Despite victory, the lack of territorial gains at Versailles, as well as mounting war debt and unemployment, mounted huge pressure on the liberal government. One of the dissenters was Benito Mussolini, a former socialist who watched on with keen interest as nationalist Gabriele D'Annunzio demonstrated just how little influence the government now wielded with the 15-month occupation of Fiume in 1919. Mussolini had founded the Fascio di Combattimento 'League for Combat' in Milan in March of that year, earning many supporters. Many former soldiers from the Great War joined the cause, forming the blackshirts, an armed militia that would act as a violent defence force for the growing movement. Fascism was a form of extreme right-wing nationalism that was meant to be a progressive alternative to liberalism and socialism. It spawned from Mussolini's frustration towards the incompetent liberal government and his contempt for conventional socialism. Mussolini tapped into the nationwide political disillusionment and the fear of a communist uprising just as Hitler would later do in Germany. Fascism particularly appealed to the lower middle class petty bourgeoisie who were saddled with debt and unemployment and aspired to much more. Fascism was quickly becoming the perfect vehicle for the people to vent all of their political frustrations.

Fascist Italy timeline

1918

End of the Great War
Despite being on the winning side, Italy feels short-changed by its wartime allies France and Britain with little spoils of war to show for their previous alliance.
1918

Birth of the Blackshirts
Mussolini forms the Fascio di Combattimento and the first squads of black-shirted militia. The same year, the party wins just 2 per cent of the vote in the 1919 Italian General Election.
1919

Strong election results
The National Fascist Party (PNF) is formed and the party fares much better than two years before, winning 35 seats in the 1921 General Election.
1921

March on Rome
In October Mussolini takes the initiative and threatens to march on the Italian capital to be forcibly installed as Prime Minister. The king ultimately gives into his demands.
1922

Acerbo Law
Mussolini passes Acerbo Law in November, decreeing that the party with the highest number of votes in the upcoming election will gain two-thirds of the seats in parliament.
1923

The National Fascist Party (PNF) was formed out of the Fasci di Combattimento in 1921 and its impact was first felt during the 1922 general strike. Armed squads of Fascist blackshirts called squaristri took control of services, minimising the effect of the socialist strike. Fascism was now a serious political power and in October Mussolini believed that the time was right to march on Rome. The Fascists issued an ultimatum; give us the government or we'll take it by force. Blackshirts rioted in towns across Italy in an intimidating show of power to Prime Minister Luigi Facta and King Victor Emmanuel III. The weak liberal government hesitated over a decision on what to do. A state of emergency was set to be called but sensing an impending civil war, the king stepped in. In an unconstitutional move, he took matters into his own hands and invited Mussolini to become Prime Minister. The era of Fascist Italy had begun.

Mussolini's leadership was tentative at first. The squaristri violence was toned down and the first Fascist cabinet included both liberals and social democrats. The Fascist Grand Council was established in 1923 and the blackshirts were turned into a national militia. Acerbo Law was passed the same year, ruling that Fascists would always hold the majority in parliament. The next year the Fascists eased to 65 per cent of the vote in the 1924 elections. The murder of prominent socialist Giacomo Matteotti in June caused the resignation of opposition MPs in protest, helping Mussolini achieve even more power. With his leadership now undisputed, Mussolini established a dictatorship in January 1925. All non-Fascist political activity was banned and the national press put under state control, with Fascist propaganda dominating the media. The Fascist state was now in full swing and the Italian people were warned to adhere to the dictatorship or else. The measures weren't as violent and sadistic as they would be in Nazi Germany but it was still a ruthless dictatorship. Membership of the Fascist party rose to 2 million in 1934 and a cult of personality grew around Mussolini, who was now titled Il Duce (the leader). Propaganda in the media, in artwork and at rallies, portrayed Mussolini as a strong leader who would take Italy forward and away from the failures of liberalism. Anti-Fascists left Italy en mass and any that stayed were thrown into prison by the OVRA, Mussolini's secret police. More than 4,000 people were imprisoned but very few were sentenced to death with the OVRA much less violent than Hitler's Gestapo.

Mussolini believed that Italy's children were the future of Fascism. Fascist youth organisations were formed and the state education system was put in line with his political and social views. Young Fascist boys were expected to be foot-soldiers for the nation. Meanwhile Italy's girls and women would be expected to be married and have as many children as possible. This was known as Mussolini's battle for births as he tried, in vain, to increase the birth rate and ready the country for war. Every walk of life from sports teams to trade unions were put under the banner of the totalitarian Fascist state. In addition, the 1929 Lateran Treaty cemented relations with the Pope and the Catholic Church. With the media completely censored and the blackshirts running the streets, there was very little room for criticism. Aside from sporadic anti-Fascist literature, there was very little recorded resistance. The Italian economy was moulded into a Fascist corporate state, which had complete control and banned workers from striking. The corporate state was flawed and ineffective and although Mussolini famously got the trains to run on time, the average pay had fallen by 1929. Mussolini's insistence on making Italy great again ruined the economy as the revaluation of the Lira and the policy of self-sufficient autarky crippled the nation's finances and trade relationships.

Mussolini desired to rule the Mediterranean and was intent on showing major world powers that Italy was a force to be reckoned with on the international stage. Using the Roman Empire as his template, he saw himself as a modern day Julius Caesar and sanctioned the invasion of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1936, a brutal campaign that avenged the Italian Army's devastating defeat 40 years earlier and gained an African colony for Italy. The Italians also gave significant military support to Franco in the Spanish Civil War, one of many European powers to wade into the conflict. Mussolini was initially against an alliance with Germany. He didn't agree with the anti-Semitic policies and in their initial meetings, he saw Hitler as very much the junior partner. Despite both being far-right dictatorships, Fascist Italy was very different to the Third Reich. Both philosophies believed in the cult of the leader and increased living space for populations, but Italian Fascism didn't have a clear focus on race like Hitler's crazed ideas of racial purity, at least prior to the war. However after a visit to Germany, Mussolini began to change his mind, wowed by the strength of the Wehrmacht. With war on the horizon, he believed that an alliance with Germany was now Italy's best bet. With a keen eye on international affairs, Mussolini now believed that Western democracies like France and Britain were weak and obsolete. In 1936, Italy formally allied with Germany under the Berlin-Rome Axis. Four years later, the Fascist state was going to war on the side of the Axis.

> “'Mussolini tapped into the nationwide political disillusionment and the fear of a communist uprising just as Hitler would later do in Germany”

1924 General Election
In the 1924 General Election, the Fascists gain 65 per cent of the vote. Their success is partly down to an increase in violence and intimidation.
1924

Consolidation of power
All independent media is closed down as complete press censorship is enforced. The following year all political parties except for the PNF are banned.
1925

Lateran treaties
The relationship between the Catholic Church and the government is strengthened under new accords as Vatican City is made an independent state.
1934

Invasion of Abyssinia
After supporting France and Britain in the Stresa Front against Germany, Mussolini sends troops to Abyssinia to claim an African colony for Italy and to avenge the country's catastrophic defeat in 1896.
1935

Italo-German relations
Changing his political tune, Mussolini gets closer to Hitler and the Rome-Berlin Axis is signed between the two countries in November.
1936

Anti-Comintern pact
The future Axis, Italy, Germany and Japan, sign a treaty that cements their ambition to move against their political enemy, the Communist USSR.
1937

Invasion of Albania
With war on the horizon, Mussolini initiates an attack on Albania. After one month, Albania is defeated and King Zog disposed of.
1939

Pact of Steel
After signing the Pact of Steel with Germany in May, Italy declares neutrality after the German invasion of Poland in September. Italy won't stay neutral for long.
1939

To war
Impressed by the Third Reich's show of strength, Mussolini chooses to ally with Germany and enters World War II on the side of the Axis.
1940

Failed war effort
The Italian war effort is characterised by a series of military blunders. Italy is ill-prepared for war and relies on German assistance throughout until its invasion by the Allies.
1944

1944

COLLISION COURSE IN THE PACIFIC

Militarism and opportunism caused the ongoing conflict between Japan and China to erupt in full-scale war and contributed to the genesis of World War II

Japanese soldiers celebrate the capture of Nanking, China

> “‘Japanese leaders saw expansion in territory and influence as key to their country’s survival and its place among the world’s great nations”

The rise of the Japanese nation on the 20th century world stage was accomplished with stunning swiftness. In less than a century, Japan transformed from a feudal land cloaked in mystery to the modern preeminent power in East Asia. After US Navy Commodore Matthew C Perry led American warships into Tokyo Bay in 1853, opening Japan to trade, the nation began to embrace Western culture. As the feudal nation modernised, the restoration of the Meiji dynasty and the end of the Tokugawa shogunate hastened the evolution of Japanese society.

Along with modernisation came concerns that the island nation, which lacked arable land and natural resources, would one day find itself unable to sustain its economy, particularly in the face of an ever-growing population. As Japan’s dilemma became apparent during the late 19th Century, the nation embarked on a concerted military modernisation program. The army grew more powerful. The Imperial Japanese Navy, patterned closely after the British Royal Navy, increased steadily in strength.

Japanese leaders saw expansion in territory and influence as key to their country’s survival and its place among the world’s great nations. Military strength would support Japan’s reach for resources. In 1894-95, the nation flexed its military muscle against China over influence on the Korean peninsula. The swift Japanese victory in the First Sino-Japanese War was followed by further expansion. In 1910, Japan annexed Korea. After siding with the Allies in World War I, the country was given a League of Nations mandate over numerous Pacific islands. The defining moment for Japan’s future was its astounding victory over Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Spectacular military triumphs at Port Arthur and Tsushima gained the Japanese military worldwide prestige. An upstart Asian nation had defeated a traditional European power. Emboldened by its military successes, Japan looked with exploitative lust toward its vast neighbour on the Asian continent. China had long been oppressed by foreign powers. European nations had established trade

Pacific Conflict Timeline

1894

First Sino-Japanese War
In a dispute concerning dominant influence on the Korean peninsula, Japan defeats China. Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910. **1894-95**

Boxer Rebellion
Several European powers and the United States send troops to quell a nationalistic uprising intended to halt Western and Christian influence in China. **1899-1901**

Russo-Japanese War
Japan defeats Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, the first time that an Asian nation has vanquished a traditional European power. A key naval victory is achieved at Tsushima. **1904-05**

Sun Yat-sen rises
Proclaiming the establishment of the Republic of China, Dr Sun Yat-sen later becomes the nation’s president and leader of the Kuomintang of China. **1912**

Twenty-One Demands
In the midst of World War I, Japan submits a list of demands to China concerning the resource rich northern Chinese province of Manchuria. The Chinese respond by boycotting Japanese products. **1915**

League of Nations mandate
After World War I, Japan receives a League of Nations mandate to govern numerous islands in the Pacific region, including the former possessions of a defeated Germany. **1919**

Jinan Incident
Japanese soldiers execute Chinese officials and bombard the city of Jinan with artillery fire, killing several thousand civilians. The Japanese supported warlords of northern China against the Kuomintang army. **1928**

missions in Chinese cities and plundered the country's wealth, eroding its cultural identity and leading to the bloody Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901, a nationalistic uprising against Western influence. In 1912, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, previously instrumental in the overthrow of the teetering Qing dynasty, proclaimed the Republic of China, emphasising the "Three Principles of the People," nationalism, modern government, and the people's livelihood. Still, throughout the early 20th century, civil and political instability wracked the country.

While prospects for land expansion and the seizure of natural resources in China appealed to the most militant Japanese leaders, there were other concerns as the two countries moved closer to renewed conflict. Chinese manufacturing, with its potential volume and access to world markets, threatened the Japanese economy, while the immense nation's fractious political situation, including armed revolts and movements toward collectivisation and socialism, were perceived as threats.

In 1915, Japan issued its Twenty-One Demands to China in a bid for concessions, primarily in the Chinese province of Manchuria. China retaliated with a boycott of Japanese goods. In 1928, interference in China's internal affairs reached a new level when Japanese soldiers shot several Chinese officials and shelled the city of Jinan during a conflict between Chinese military factions. By 1930, civil war had broken out in China, and the burgeoning strength of communist forces became cause for alarm. Growing unrest in China meant opportunity for Japan. Aggressive elements within the Japanese army were more eager to act than the government. Manchuria appeared ripe for picking. On 18th September 1931, the Japanese Kwantung Army staged the Mukden Incident, blaming the Chinese for a fabricated act of sabotage. Within days – and without the approval of the government in Tokyo – the Kwantung Army was marching into Manchuria. After five months of fighting, Japan was in control of Manchuria, and the state of Manchukuo was announced to the world.

Warmongers and right-wing radicals further eroded the authority of the Japanese government, and while the army ranged unchecked in China a wave of terror and assassination paved the way for the ascendance of pro-war ministers. Further Japanese incursions into Chinese territory became commonplace. When the League of Nations criticised its expansionist policy, Japan withdrew from the organisation.

On 7th July 1937, skirmishes between Japanese troops and Chinese soldiers at the Marco Polo Bridge spanning the Yongding River in northern China escalated into a brisk battle, igniting the Second Sino-Japanese War. The opportunistic Japanese used the incident as a pretext for a full-scale invasion of China. Within weeks, the city of Beijing and the port of Tianjin were in Japanese hands. In response to the renewed Japanese aggression, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent Nationalist Chinese forces against the enclave where 30,000 Japanese citizens lived in the International Settlement in the city of Shanghai. Both sides conducted air raids, and military and civilian casualties mounted. By October more than 200,000 Japanese troops were engaged around Shanghai, and in November the Chinese were compelled to withdraw toward the Nationalist capital at Nanking. By mid-December 1937, Nanking had fallen. Japanese soldiers involved in the campaign numbered more than 350,000, and many of them committed atrocities against the civilian population of the city. So brutal were the conquerors that the orgy of death and destruction has become known to history as the 'Rape of Nanking'. An estimated 300,000 civilians were killed.

An injured baby wails mournfully among piles of rubble in the aftermath of a brutal Japanese air raid on a railroad station in China

Still, the vastness of China and the tenacity of its armies resulted in a stalemate even though the Japanese had occupied huge swathes of Chinese territory. The US had long been concerned about protecting its own interests in China and adopted a paternalistic, diplomatic perspective on the country, while Japan's military alliance with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was also troubling. In December 1937, Japanese planes mistakenly bombed and sank the US Navy gunboat Panay on the Yangtze River, straining relations between the countries. The official Japanese government apology for the incident was perceived as hollow and disingenuous. US diplomatic pressure did little to curb Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia, however, and in the summer of 1941, Japanese troops occupied all of French Indochina. Eventually, trade sanctions and embargoes imposed by the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt led the Japanese to conclude that they had no other course but war in achieving their long-term goals. Japan imported 88 per cent of its oil, and 80 per cent of that came from the US. An American oil embargo would grind the Japanese war machine to a halt. The seizure of the oil fields of the Dutch East Indies appeared to be the only viable solution. Such a provocative action would mean war with the US and probably Great Britain. American military forces on land, in the air, and at sea in the Pacific posed a threat that had to be neutralised.

Japan resolved to accept war with the US as a necessary and acceptable risk in achieving its expansionist aims in the Pacific. The surprise Japanese attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7th December 1941, thus widened the Second Sino-Japanese War into the global conflict of World War II. As was happening elsewhere around the globe, an almighty stare-down between two incompatible political systems would now dominate for decades.

1950

Mukden Incident Japanese soldiers detonate an explosive charge on a railway near the town of Mukden and blame Chinese saboteurs. Subsequently, the Japanese Kwantung Army invades Manchuria. **1931**

Marco Polo Bridge Incident A skirmish between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge escalates and precipitates the Second Sino-Japanese War. **1937**

Fall of Beijing Approximately a month of fighting results in the Japanese capture of the Chinese city of Beijing and the nearby port city of Tianjin. **1937**

Battle of Shanghai The major Chinese city of Shanghai, renowned for its cosmopolitan culture and large international population, falls to the Japanese after more than three months of consistent fighting. **1937**

Gunboat Panay sinks Despite flying an American flag, the gunboat USS Panay is bombed and sunk by Japanese aircraft on the Yangtze River in China, sparking an international incident. **1937**

Rape of Nanking Marauding Japanese soldiers commit countless atrocities against Chinese civilians after occupying the city of Nanking. An estimated 300,000 Chinese people are murdered. **1937**

American oil embargo The United States imposes an oil embargo on Japan after its refusal to withdraw troops from French Indochina. Other vital raw materials are also restricted. **1941**

Pearl Harbor Japanese carrier-based aircraft attack the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and the Second Sino-Japanese War is engulfed by World War II. **1941**

INSIDE THE NAZI STATE

Discover what life was like in Germany under Hitler's murderous rule

The reporter from the *Daily Express*, D Sefton Delmar, hurries out into the night. It is late in the evening of 27th February 1933, and a fire is raging at the German parliament building, the Reichstag. Delmar spots Hitler arriving at the scene.

"This is a God-given signal", Hitler tells Delmar as firefighters battle the inferno. "If this fire, as I believe, turns out to be the handiwork of communists, then there is nothing that shall stop us now crushing out this murder pest with an iron fist."

The sirens and alarms that blare through the Berlin night announce not only the raging fire, but also a new beginning for life in Germany. Hitler's plot to pin the fire on a terrorist attack instigated by communists - even though it is certainly believed today the Nazis were behind the conflagration - paves the way for the Nazis to take sole control of government.

The Reichstag Fire Decree is issued the following day, suspending a string of civil liberties, while the Enabling Act comes less than a month later, the Reichstag voting itself into redundancy by permitting the chancellor to enact laws without the co-operation of parliament.

The Nazis are now in sole command and Hitler is set to become a dictator at last. The German people must prepare for life under Nazi rule, which will promote a glorious People's Community united under one party and one, bountiful leader who has a predetermined, terrifying ideology that he will force upon the nation…

Hitler Youth

The Nazis' bid to create a militarised nation saw the Hitler Youth emerge as a key organisation during the 1930s

Germany had long enjoyed a thriving youth movement, with dozens of clubs and societies active before 1933. The Hitler Youth was formed in 1926, but it was not initially a popular group; only once the Nazis came to power and either banned or synthesised existing collectives did the Hitler Youth begin to blossom. There were fewer than 60,000 members when the Nazis claimed power, but almost 9 million in 1939 when membership became compulsory.

The aim of the movement was to breed a nation of soldiers. Entry began with induction into the cubs or 'pimpfen' at the age of six, before boys of ten years then joined the German Youth or 'Deutsches Jungvolk' before finally graduating to the Hitler Youth, 'Hitler Jugend', at 14, where they remained until they could join the military. The Hitler Youth learned the motto: "Live faithfully, fight bravely and die laughing."

Many boys liked the camaraderie the movement engendered and plenty of those from less privileged backgrounds loved the games, summer camps, camping trips and ceremonies that bonded the members together. Indeed, many children joined up against their parents' wishes. As the boys got older, however, some of them found their enthusiasm waning, especially during the war years when the emphasis was on strict discipline and military training.

While the boys trained for lives as warriors of the state, girls too were encouraged into a society, the League of German Girls, which promoted a robust view of Germanic motherhood to those over ten years old. They learned the motto, "Be faithful, be pure, be German." Again, enthusiasm waned once membership became obligatory in 1939.

Daily activities for the Hitler Youth

1 Shooting
Shooting was a required activity for all members aged ten or over. Rifle ownership was not common in 1930s Germany and shooting proved a perennially popular activity among the boys.

2 Sports
Physical education was a vital component of the Hitler Youth movement, though the compulsory calisthenics were often unpopular. Competitive sports, especially athletics and boxing, were also strongly encouraged.

3 Education
While core education was left to the school curriculum, the Nazis used the Youth movement to propagate its exclusionist policies, teaching racism against Jews and other 'outsiders.' Some older members of the Hitler Youth joined the SA stormtroopers in racist attacks.

4 Military training
Engendering discipline and respect for authority was integral to the Hitler Youth's bid to mould future warriors and plenty of time was spent lined up in formation. Direct military training included parade-ground drills, Morse code, trench digging and the like.

5 Camping
Another popular activity with young boys and girls, camping sprang into life during the spring and summer months. German youth movements already had a long tradition of camping over Whitsun, the seventh Sunday after Easter.

6 Hiking
Often going hand in hand with camping, hiking was of particular importance as it built physical stamina, discipline and camaraderie among the members, as well as propagating practical skills like map reading. Hiking was often encouraged on Sundays to distract boys from church activities.

7 Ceremonies
Children appreciate parades, pomp and pageantry and the ceremonial side of Nazi life sought to build a sense of purpose and community among its youth. The Hitler Youth's drum and bugle corps played a prominent role in Nazi social activity.

8 Music and singing
A key area for those boys who did not excel at sports, music and singing were integral to the Hitler Youth, with its penchant for pageantry. Reich youth leader Baldur von Schirach believed that, "Songs possess the strongest community-building power."

Among other things, the Hitler Youth taught the handling of guns

Hitler Youth members on a camping trip

Women

Under the Nazi regime, a woman's place was most definitely in the home...

Hedwig Rohde received the Mother's Cross for having eight children

The Nazi Party played up stereotypes to a terrifying degree as it promoted the superiority of 'pure Aryans', male and female. The men were to be great warriors, happily surrendering their lives for the Führer and the Reich. Women, meanwhile, were to be strong homemakers and willing mothers. They, like the men, were to be physically robust. They would have strong hips and wear neither heels nor make-up. They would not smoke in public. Propriety was their watchword.

"The slogan 'Emancipation of women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals", said Hitler at the 1934 Nuremberg Rally. "For her [the woman] the world is her husband, her family, her children and her home." The Führer's medieval view of society stood in stark contrast to the liberalism of the Weimar Republic, which had granted women the right to vote, while also making concessions toward equal pay and professional advancement.

According to Hitler, the Weimar Republic had got it all wrong. When coming to power, the Nazis dismissed women from senior positions in the civil service and within three years they had banned females from the legal profession as well. Under Nazi ideology, the woman's place was definitely in the home.

Hitler wanted a high birth rate, and good morals, and therefore launched a key policy, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage, which from 1933 loaned newly wed couples 1,000 marks via the granting of vouchers for household goods. The woman was required to surrender her job, though a quarter of the loan was written off with each child produced. A rising population would boost the long-term plans for German expansion. Women without husbands, meanwhile, could volunteer to carry a child for true Aryan members of the SS. Marriages between 'pure' Germans and outsiders were forbidden.

"The mission of women is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world," said Nazi propaganda chief Josef Goebbels in 1929. "The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches eggs for him. In exchange, the male takes care of gathering food, and stands guard and wards off the enemy."

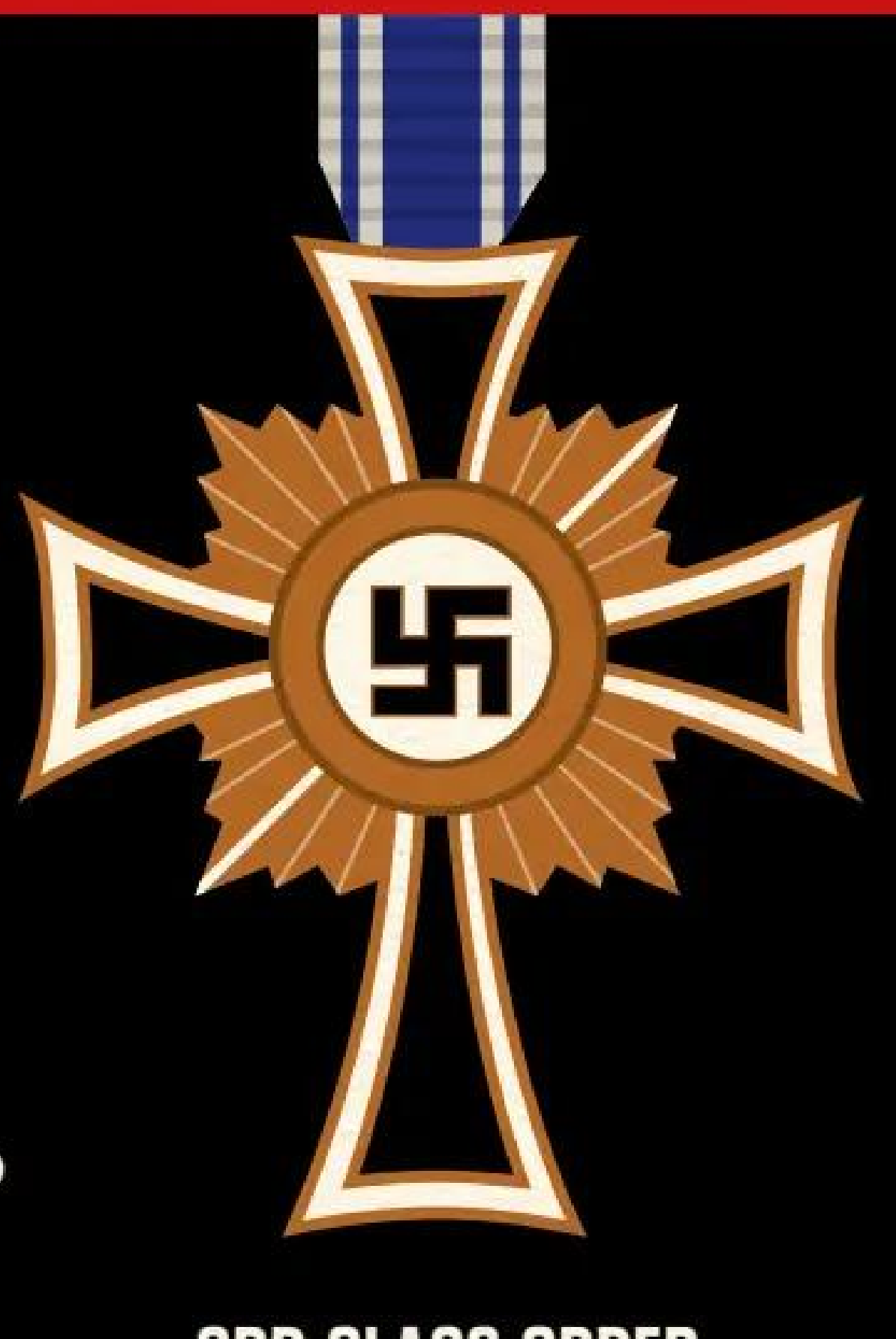
Upon coming to power, the party launched a clutch of organisations to promote its worldview among women, including the prominent German Women's League, formed in 1933 to oversee all-female societies. By the time war broke out in 1939, it boasted more than 6 million members.

The pressures of feeding a war machine eventually saw the Nazis modify their policy toward women and from 1939 onward they encouraged women back to work, though female labourers remained employed, primarily in agriculture and industry.

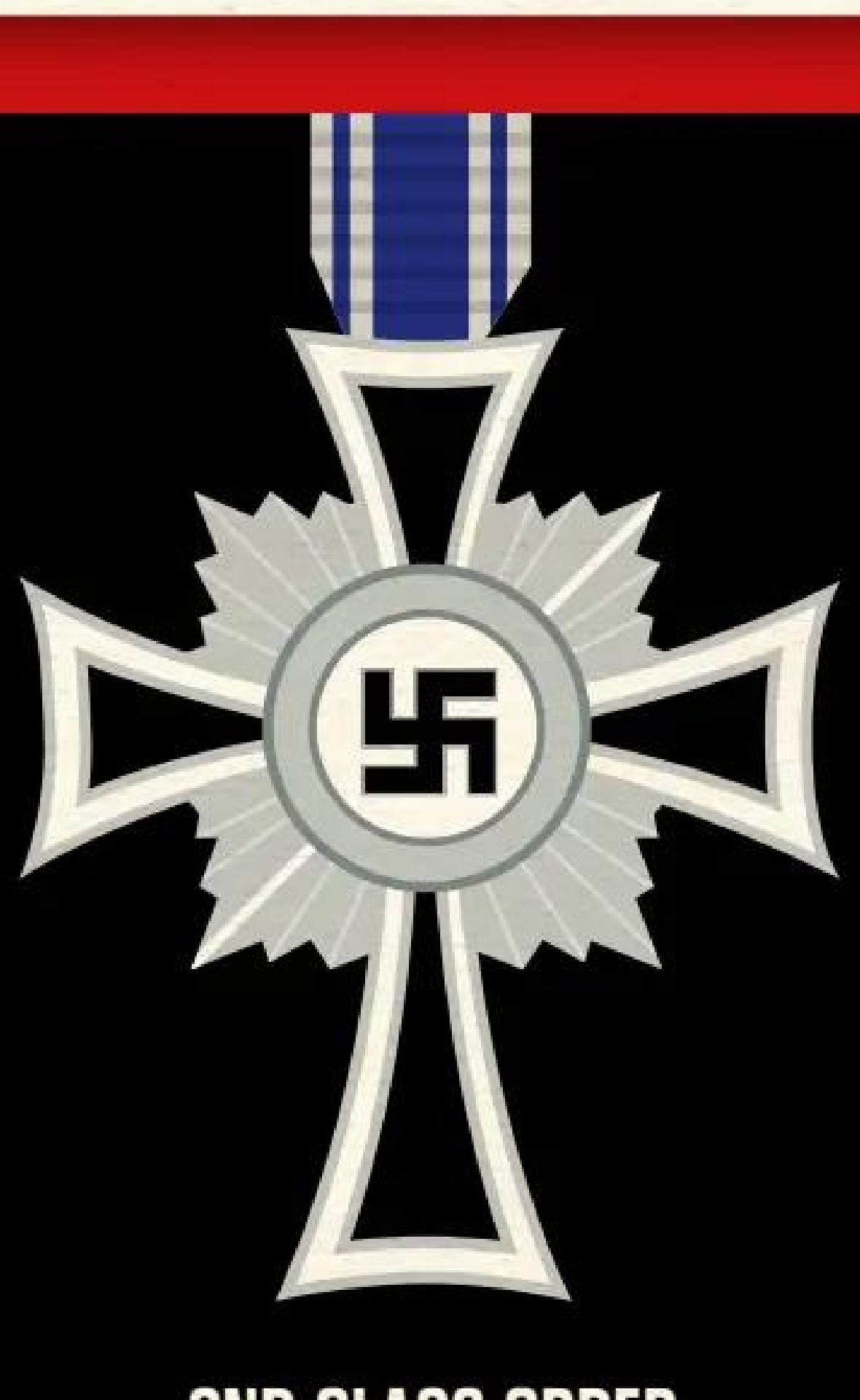
Nazi officer Leiter Reichel with his wife and 12 children – his wife is wearing her Gold Mother's Cross

Cross of Honour of the German Mother

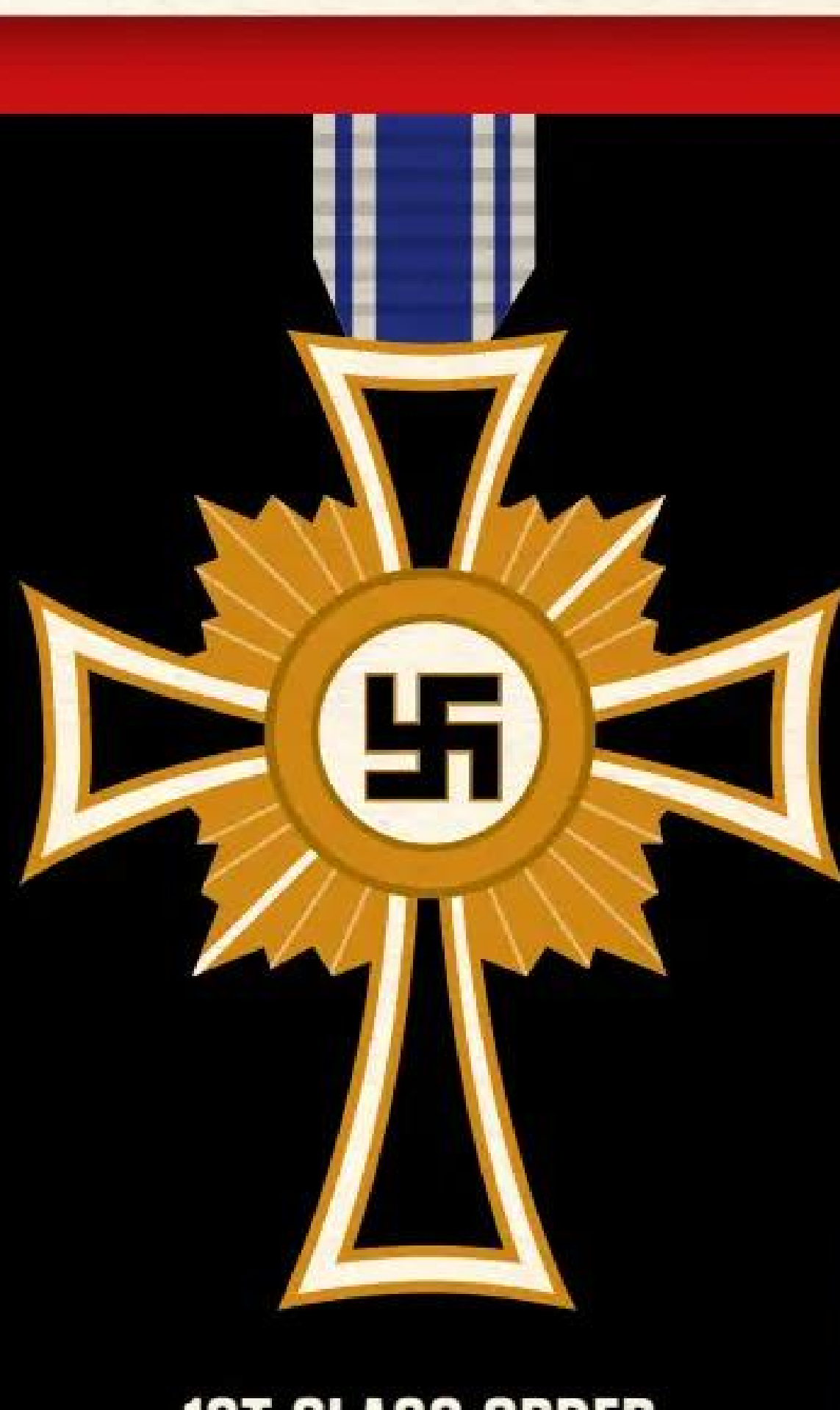
Referred to as the Mother's Cross, this government-conferred award was introduced in 1939 and was designed to encourage scrupulousness, fine moral rectitude and prolific childbearing feats among German women. The honours were awarded on 12th August, the birthday of Hitler's mother. The cross came in three categories.



3RD CLASS ORDER
BRONZE CROSS
For mothers with four to five children



2ND CLASS ORDER
SILVER CROSS
For mothers with six to seven children



1ST CLASS ORDER
GOLD CROSS
For mothers with eight or more children

Deutschlands Sieg

Propaganda

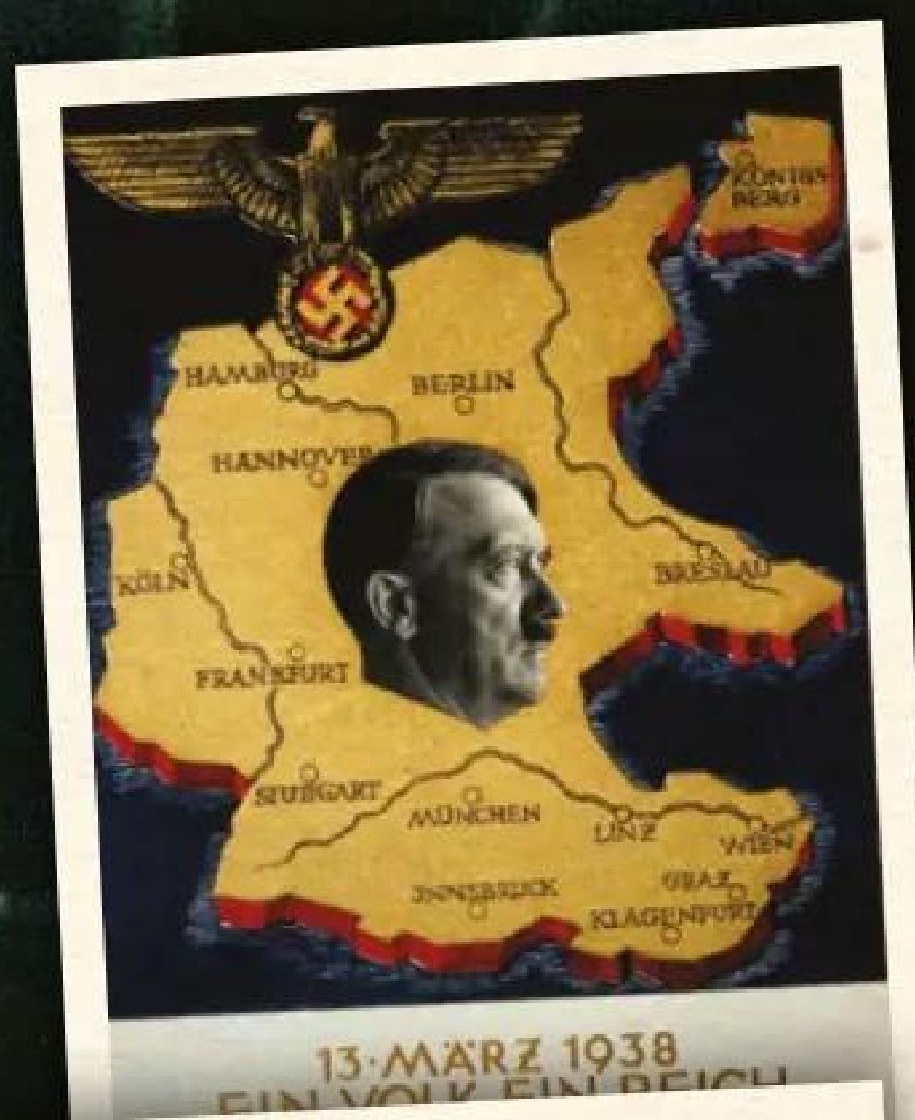
In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler emphasised the vital role propaganda would play in his bid to create a new Germany

According to the Führer's top PR man, Josef Goebbels, propaganda was the most modern of tools and the Nazi's "sharpest weapon in conquering the state." Hitler formed the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda once he came to power, employing art, radio, film, printed media, architecture, theatre and music to promote the Nazi ideology of Aryan superiority, a people's community and a national socialism defined by extreme polarisation of racial stereotypes, good and bad.

The Nazis sought to inspire a military spirit and war-readiness among the populace and also to promote the 'Hitler myth', which cast the Führer as the people's chancellor, sworn to deliver a repressed Germany from the shackles imposed by the world superpowers after World War I.

Once at war, from 1939, Nazi propaganda tactics shifted focus in a bid to maintain public morale and to mobilise the people's efforts to war. This became increasingly difficult after the catastrophic defeat at Stalingrad in 1943. During the regime's final years, Hitler and Goebbels focussed on the perils of Bolshevism and the Red Threat from the East as well as promoting an ever-increasing anti-Semitism. The Nazis also used propaganda to demand a greater resolve from the people as the war dragged on.

For all its efficacy, however, the propaganda machine could not hold back the tides of war, and though active until the end of the conflict, it eventually crumbled with all the other mechanisms of the Nazi state.

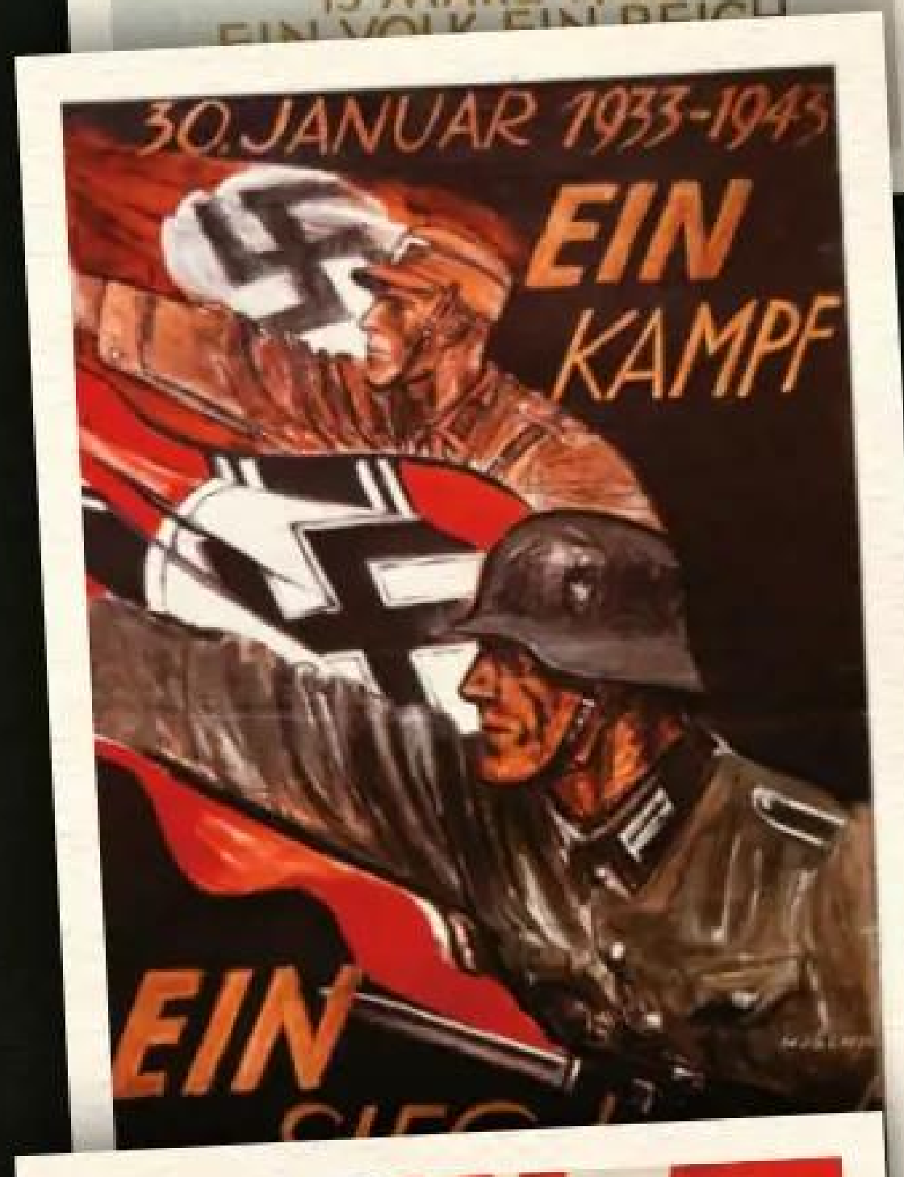


Hitler myth

"One people, one empire, one leader"

1938

As the Nazis geared up for war, they sought to unite the public behind one strong dictator and war leader. Josef Goebbels considered the 'Hitler myth' his greatest-ever PR coup.

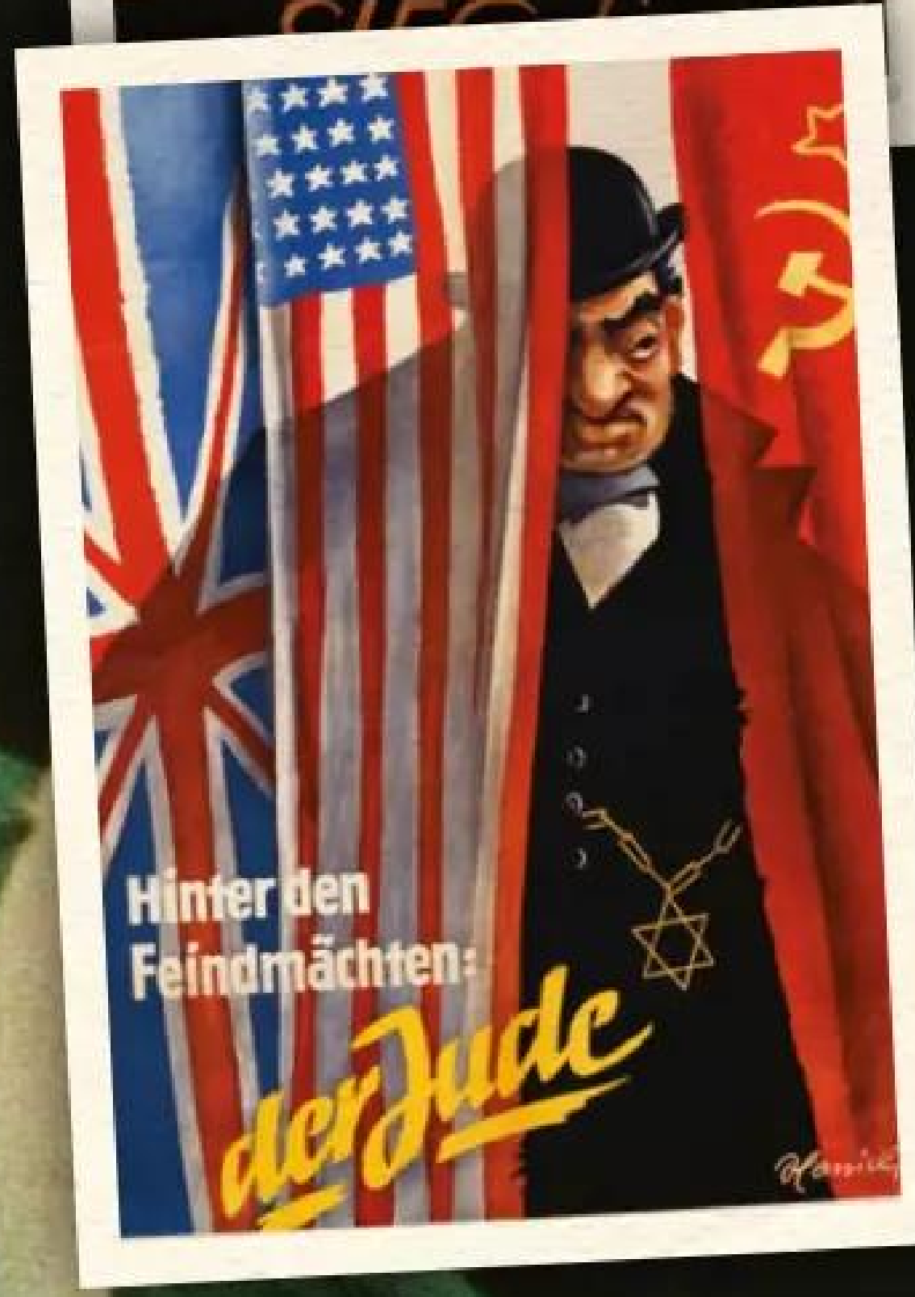


Strong German morale

"One struggle, one victory"

1943

When the tide began to turn against Hitler's armies post-Stalingrad, he tried to maintain public resolve with this campaign celebrating ten years of Nazi rule.



Anti-Semitism

"Behind the enemy: the Jews"

1945

The Nazis stepped up their anti-Semitic efforts as the defeats mounted, hoping to boost German solidarity by claiming Germany was the victim of an international Jewish-led conspiracy.

Art & Culture

The Nazi regime was well disposed toward cultural activity – as long as it served the state, of course

The cultural liberality enjoyed under the Weimar Republic was anathema to the Nazis who regarded artistic expression as devoid of moral fortitude.

Modernist endeavours were to the Nazis synonymous with Jewry, and they dismissed any form of abstract art – like Expressionism or Cubism – or atonal music. Jazz was despised, given its link with African-Americans. Feminism, too, was the work of the non-Aryans, they said.

The Propaganda Ministry formed the Reich Music Chamber, which celebrated composer Richard Strauss headed up before his removal in 1935, to promote music by Germany's great classical masters, such as Beethoven and Brahms. Hitler was said to be a fan of Richard Wagner's operas, which celebrated Teutonic myths and culture. The nation, however, preferred common songs and the more popular music, so the Third Reich struggled to regiment its populace's listening culture.

The Nazis did enjoy great success, however, with their control of cinema, which Goebbels recognised as a vital tool in his propaganda mission, establishing a Reich film chamber in 1933. During the year Hitler came to power, 64 Hollywood films screened in Germany. By 1940 that number had fallen to just five. Disney cartoons remained popular, but the vast majority of films financed by the regime contained some form of political message. Among the most famous – and recognised as ahead of their time by modern film historians – were the works of Leni Riefenstahl, such as *The Triumph Of The Will*, a documentary on the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, and *Olympia*, about the Olympic Games held in Berlin two years later.

Religion

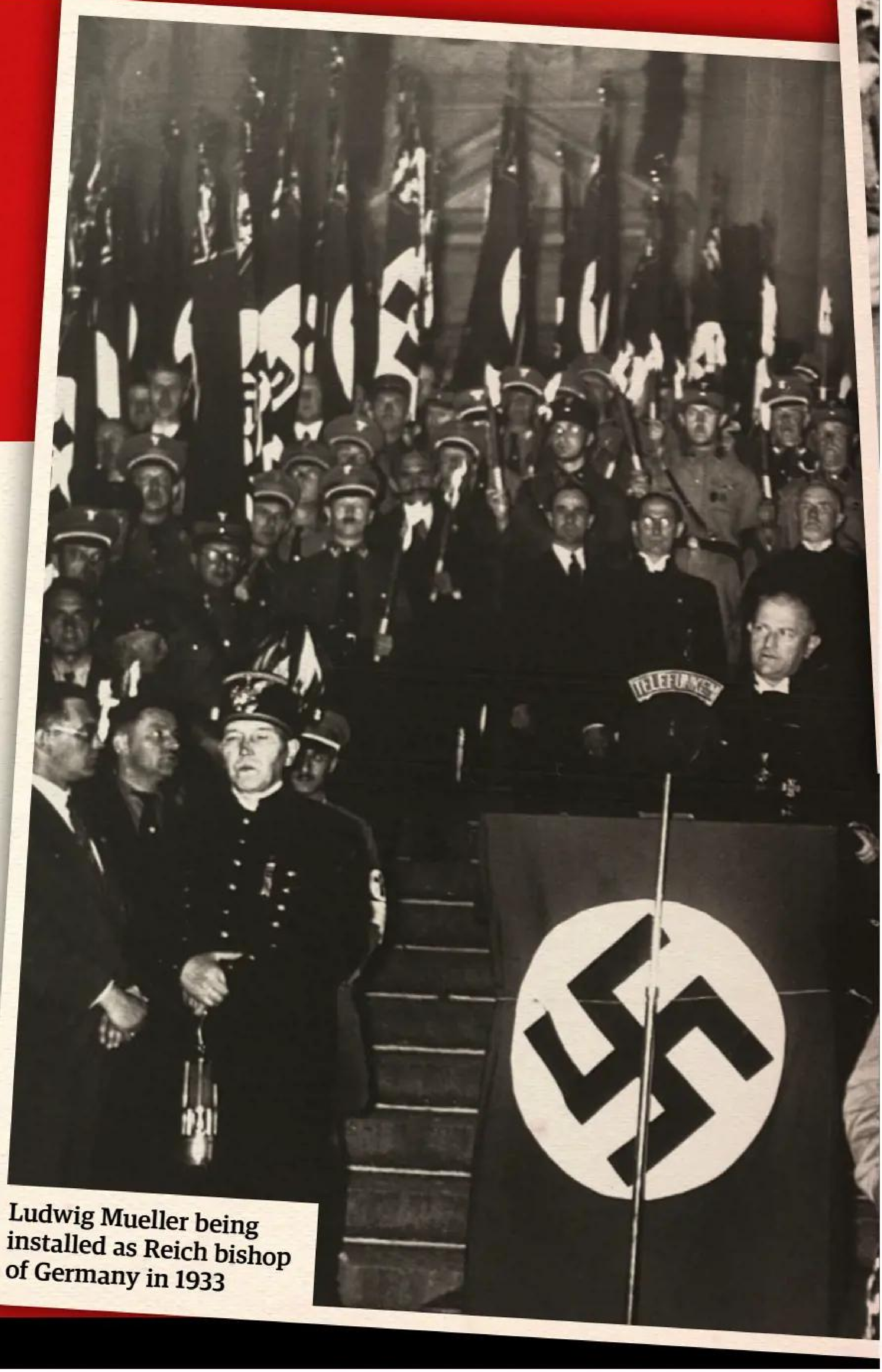
Though Hitler never officially renounced his faith, by 1939 the Nazis had effectively severed their link with the Church

Religion was a perplexing problem for the Nazis. Almost 60 per cent of the German population was Protestant, primarily organised under the German Evangelical Church, which from 1933 the Nazis sought to bring under the auspices of a centralised Reich Church.

However, many pastors resisted the move, with a group of around 5,000 dissidents forming the Confessional Church, which opposed Nazi interference in religious affairs. The Roman Catholic Church, meanwhile, proved even more confounding as its members (around 30 per cent of the population) looked outside Germany, to Rome, for spiritual leadership.

To begin with, Hitler worked with the Catholics, forging a concordat with the Vatican where the papacy recognised Nazi power while the new regime agreed to leave the Catholic Church to its own devices inside Germany. However, the Nazis remained hostile to the Catholics and murdered a number of leading religious figures, such as Fritz Gerlich, on 1934's infamous Night of the Long Knives.

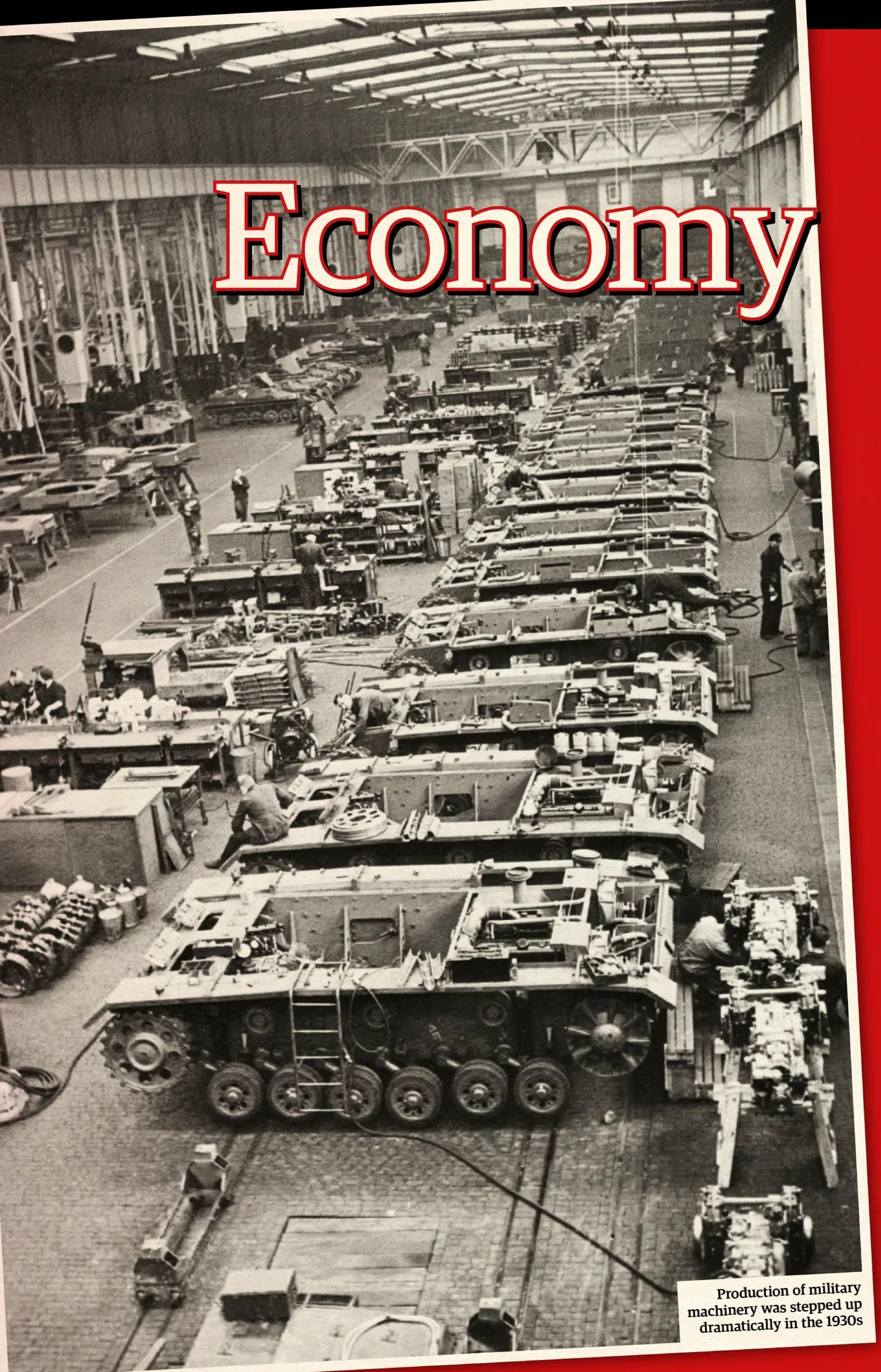
Relations had broken down by 1937, when Pope Pius XI decided the Catholic Church could no longer remain silent in the face of mounting Nazi suppression and he wrote to his bishops, attacking the Nazi attitude toward Catholicism. Not surprisingly, the Nazis did not take the move well and by 1939 a series of aggressive measures had diminished considerably the Catholic Church's influence in Germany. The Church never provided any effective resistance to the Third Reich.



Ludwig Mueller being installed as Reich bishop of Germany in 1933

Economy

Impending confrontation with the world's largest superpowers required an economic transformation



Production of military machinery was stepped up dramatically in the 1930s

In German homes, February 1933, families gather around the radio to hear Hitler talk of his assault on unemployment. The economic depression that hit in 1929 and 1930 had a devastating effect on a German economy only recently recovered from the aftermath of World War I. By 1932, one in three workers was out of work. Hitler would save the German worker, agricultural or industrial. "Within four years", he declared, "unemployment must be overcome."

The Nazis succeeded in creating jobs, though much of their success was built on policies introduced by the previous regime, and the figures were skewed by influencing factors such as the Nazis' bid to take women out of work, thereby creating jobs for the male labour force. They also reintroduced conscription in 1935, which again provided employment for young men, while their attack on undesirables removed them from the state's economic figures.

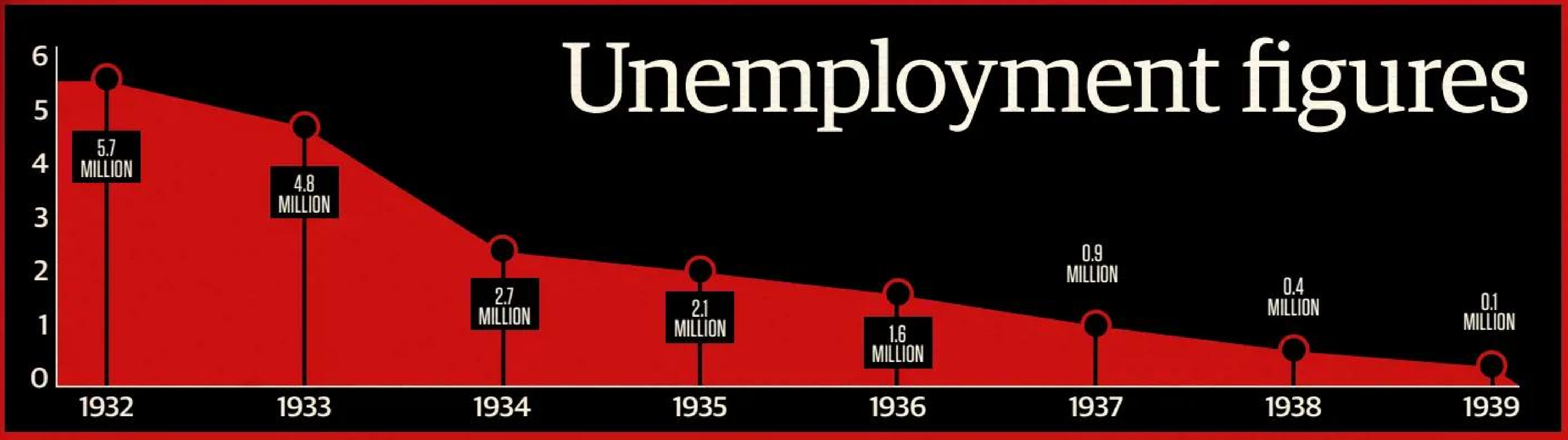
The head of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, oversaw an economic recovery between 1933 and 1936, as the Nazis embarked on a huge public-works programme, granting tax concessions for businesses to take on more staff, and taking their first steps toward rearmament.

The Nazis also replaced the trade unions of the Weimar Republic with the German Labour Front ('Deutsches Arbeitsfront'), which became the largest organisation in the country, focusing its efforts on worker morale, encouraging people to sign up to Hitler's 'People's Community' ideal.

From 1936, Herman Göring, the man charged with rebuilding the Luftwaffe, took control of economic matters and he helped execute the aggressive Four Year Plan, which strove to make Germany war-ready by 1940. Rearmament accelerated. In 1939, German military spending stood at 25 per cent of its national income, compared to 16 per cent in Britain and just one per cent in the United States.

Under the Four Year Plan, Göring aimed to make Germany self-sufficient and the Nazi propaganda machine went into overdrive, encouraging the people to remain patriotic in their purchasing, always buying German. Hiking and package holidays became national pleasures, with the propaganda machine falsely playing up a rise in living standards. Unemployment fell during the 1930s, but the aggressive rearmament policy led to shortages of key commodities and longer working hours for many. The consumption of higher quality foods – meat, bacon, milk, eggs, fish vegetables, sugar, tropical fruit and beer – also diminished.

Unemployment figures



The destruction of Poland

Germany's swift and devastating invasion of Poland ignited a global war that led to over 60 million deaths

Hitler's decision to invade Poland set the world on a course towards a global war of unprecedented savagery that would take six years and millions of deaths to end. The conquest of the Polish state was to be a rapid victory for the Wehrmacht, the first of many stunning triumphs in the first years of WWII. But it was by no means an inevitable step in Germany's efforts to wage the war that Hitler deemed vital to the country's very survival.

Prior to the invasion, Hitler had in fact viewed Poland as a potential ally in a future invasion of the USSR, a war that he had stated was his ultimate desire in his infamous book *Mein Kampf*. Germany's Führer believed that offering Poland both territorial gains in Ukraine and aid in its own efforts to relocate its persecuted Jewish population in return for supporting a war on Stalin's people, would prove to be a very attractive offer. The two nations had even signed a non-aggression pact on 26th January 1934 as Hitler moved quickly to secure the cooperation of Poland. But it appeared that Hitler grossly miscalculated.

Following a series of approaches from the Third Reich, Poland's Foreign Minister Jozef Beck rejected Hitler's personal advances on 5th January 1939. Germany's own Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, made another effort to persuade the Poles to back Germany on the 25th January, but was also rebuffed. Poland's refusal to acquiesce sealed its fate. Hitler resolved to wipe the entire Polish state off the map. In his eyes, Poland had forfeited the right to even exist. Plans to invade Poland (codenamed Case White) had first been drawn up in 1928 by the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, Werner von Fritsch. These plans were adapted by Generals Gunther Blumentritt and Erich von Manstein and finalised (following Poland's rebuttal) on 15th June 1939. Germany was to invade Poland from three sides. On 1st September 1939, it did just that, but not before Hitler's outrageous claims on radio that Germany was responding to a Polish assault; a flagrant effort to portray the doomed state as the aggressor. This was accompanied by an SS Commando unit attacking a German radio station clad in Polish uniforms and a foiled plan to blow up schools, theatres and monuments as 'evidence' of Polish violence. Hostilities began with the Luftwaffe bombing the town of Wielun, destroying three-quarters of it and killing around 1,200 people. Shortly afterwards, a German battleship opened fire on a Polish military depot in a harbour in Danzig. The main land assault soon followed, with German forces penetrating the borders from the north and west, and a combined German-Slovak army invading from the South. The target of this three-pronged attack was Warsaw.

The speed of the German onslaught was astounding, catching the Polish army mid mobilisation. By 3rd September, Hitler's forces reached the Vistula River, ten kilometres from the German border. Four days later the 30th Infantry Division crossed the river Warthe via German-engineered bridges, and on the same day the 8th Army took the textile city of Lodz.

Retreat

The Polish forces were reeling, desperately scrambling to forge a cohesive defence. As they did so, the 4th Panzer Division approached the outskirts of Warsaw on 8th September, with General Heinz Guderian leading his 3rd Army tanks across the Narew to assault the Bug River line on the 9th September. Warsaw itself was attacked on the same day. It was all Poland could do to engage in a general retreat, abandoning the Polish Corridor and Upper Silesia as it fell back.

A faint ray of hope finally appeared for the Polish forces in the guise of General Tadeusz Kutrzeba's plan to lead a counter-attack. Hemmed in by German forces to the north on the Vistula and the south on the Bzura River, Kutrzeba recognised that his Poznan Army had one advantage: the Germans didn't quite know where his forces were. On the night of 9th September, Kutrzeba's army began its assault from the south of the Bzura, starting the single largest battle of the entire campaign, and one that would adopt the river's name. Realising that the 8th Army was inadequately secured by the overstretched 30th Infantry, the wily Polish general had opted to target them. The counter-attack (which also

The conquest of Poland

1939

The invasion begins
Germany begins a brutal invasion of Poland in the early hours, beginning with an aerial assault.
1st September 1939

Battle of Westerplatte
In the first hours of the invasion the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein fires on a Polish military depot.
1st September 1939

The Vistula
Within two days of launching their attack the Germans reach the Vistula River, ten kilometres from the German border.
3rd September 1939

Britain and France
Britain declares war on Germany in response to its invasion of Poland. France follows suit at 5pm on the same day.
3rd September 1939

Fall of Lodz
The city of Lodz falls to the German 8th Army after the Lodz Army initially repels their advances.
7th September 1939

included cavalry) was launched with such ferocity that the Germans were pushed back around 20 kilometres and approximately 1,500 of their soldiers were killed or wounded, as were around 3,000 prisoners. The 4th Panzer Division was forced to halt its assault on Warsaw in order to come to the aid of the shocked 8th Army. Fortunately for them, the Polish attack rapidly faded, despite them retaking numerous towns.

With the German 10th and 4th Armies now converging on the Bzura, along with Army Group South and aircraft from the 4th Air Fleet, the Poles' situation quickly became a precarious one, forcing them to adopt defensive positions They were soon encircled by the Germans, who began an attack from all sides on 16 September, supported by 800 tanks and the Luftwaffe. While the bulk of the Polish forces were annihilated (an estimated 20,000 died) or surrendered, some did manage to spring the trap and fight their way towards Warsaw. Among their number was Kutrzeba, who managed to reach the capital.

The vanishingly small chance of Poland holding out for any length of time evaporated on the 17th when the USSR invaded from the east, fulfilling their secret agreement with Nazi Germany. Signed just eight days before Germany had begun its invasion, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (named after the Soviet and German foreign ministers) outlined how Poland would be divided between the two superpowers. Caught between these two military juggernauts, Poland didn't stand a chance.

The Polish government now realised that fleeing the country was their only option. Its members crossed the Romanian border on the same day as the Soviet assault and established themselves in exile in Paris. The soldiers who had managed to survive the Battle of Bzura surrendered two days later. But their efforts had not been in vain, buying time for the defences of Warsaw to be bolstered.

Surrender

Upon reaching the capital on the 22nd September, General Kutrzeba set about fighting to defend it for as long as possible, briefly becoming deputy commander of the Warsaw Army. However, his valiant efforts proved futile. The commander of the Warsaw Army, Juliusz Rommel, could see the writing was on the wall and implored his colleague to begin surrender talks with the Germans. On 28th September Kutrzeba signed the official surrender documents. The conquest of Poland was complete. The Polish state was swiftly dismantled by its German and Soviet occupiers; vast swathes of its elite classes massacred almost immediately in an effort to extinguish any threat of them trying to rebuild their ruined nation. The wrath of these ruthless invaders would soon be directed at the rest of Poland's population, with ghettos established and various atrocities inflicted.

The conquest of Poland had required 62 German Divisions and taken a month to complete, resulting in the deaths of around 66,000 Poles and 16,000 Germans. The courage and tenacity displayed by its armies simply could not prevail in the face of the German Blitzkrieg ('lightning war'), an attack that resulted in Britain and France declaring war on Hitler's Germany on 3rd September, setting the wheels in motion for a bloody global struggle.

Tadeusz Kutrzeba - Poland's defiant general

The man who led the Polish fightback against the German invasion had already experienced the horrors of WWI. The son of a captain of the Imperial Austrian Army, Tadeusz Kutrzeba commanded forces in Sarajevo, as well as seeing action on the Serbian and Russian Fronts.

Following the siege of Warsaw in WWII, Kutrzeba was captured by the Germans and spent the rest of the war in various POW camps. Liberated by American forces in April 1945, he was summoned to London and offered the post of Defence Minister in the exiled Polish government. He declined, instead heading up a commission that evaluated the Polish Army's campaign of 1939 and the contributions of Polish fighters in the west throughout the war. He would die in London in 1947 at the age of 61.

Outskirts of Warsaw
The following day the German 4th Panzer Division reaches the perimeters of Warsaw.
8th September 1939

Battle of Bzura
General Tadeusz Kutrzeba launches a valiant Polish counter-attack, inflicting heavy losses on the shocked German troops.
9th September 1939

Digging in
As two German armies approach the Poles dig in to defensive positions and await the onslaught.
15th September 1939

Trapped
The Germans quickly encircle the Polish defenders and begin to bomb their positions.
15-16th September 1939

Soviet invasion
The Red Army sweeps across the border of eastern Poland, fulfilling the Soviet's part of the pact with Germany.
17th September 1939

Government in exile
With all hope lost, the Polish government escapes the country, setting up in Paris.
17th September 1939

White flag at Bzura
With thousands of soldiers killed in the fighting, the Polish surrender at Bzura.
19th September 1939

Victory parade
In one of many examples of German-Soviet cooperation, forces from both sides hold a victory parade in the town of Brest-Litovsk.
22nd September 1939

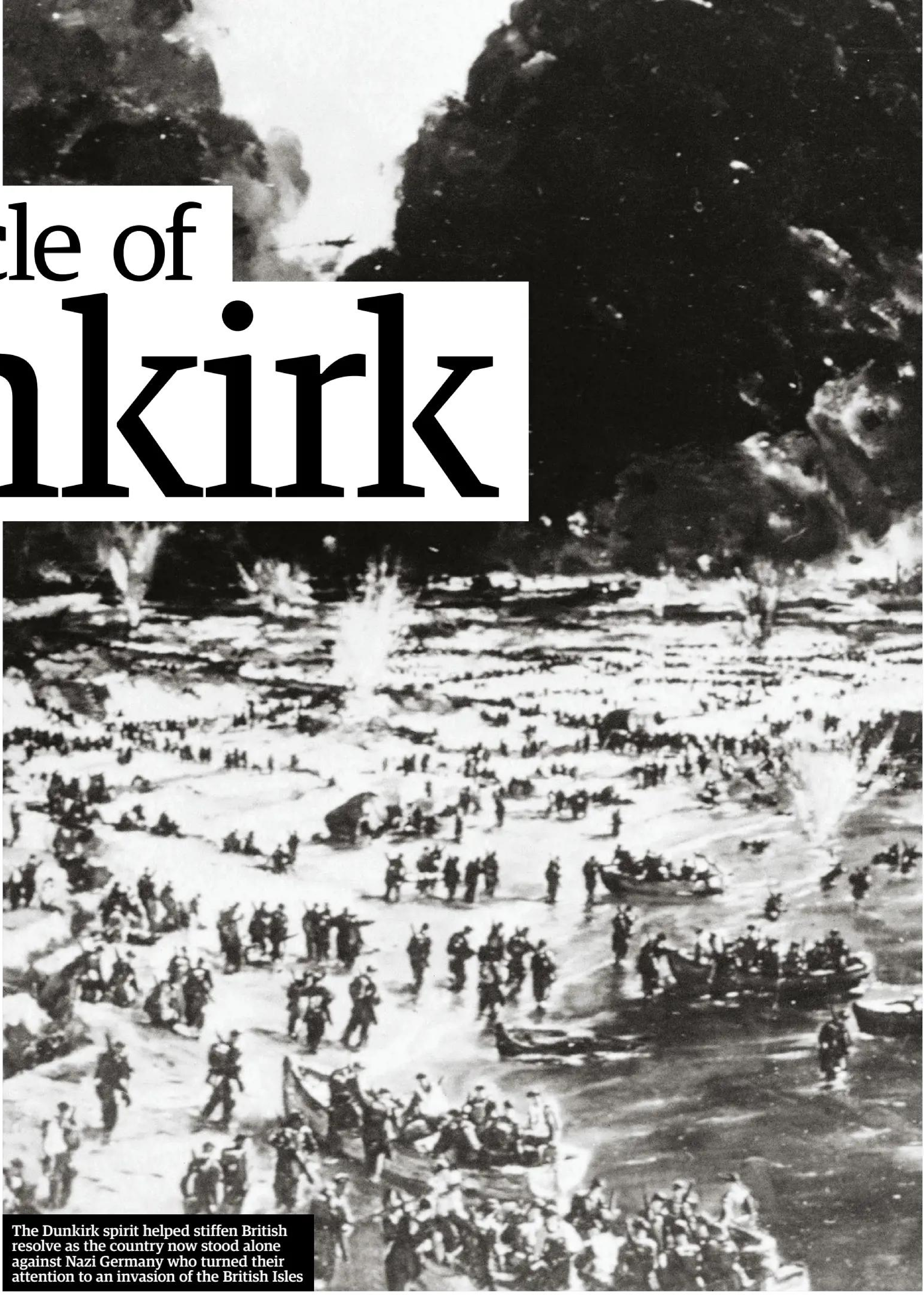
Surrender
With German ground troops closing in and the Soviets occupying the east of Poland, Warsaw is finally forced to surrender.
22nd September 1939

Annexation
With the conquest of Poland complete, Germany formally annexes the western half of Poland.
8th October 1939

1947

The miracle of Dunkirk

In May 1940, 340,000 Allied soldiers were saved from the full fury of the German blitzkrieg in an evacuation that kept Britain in the war



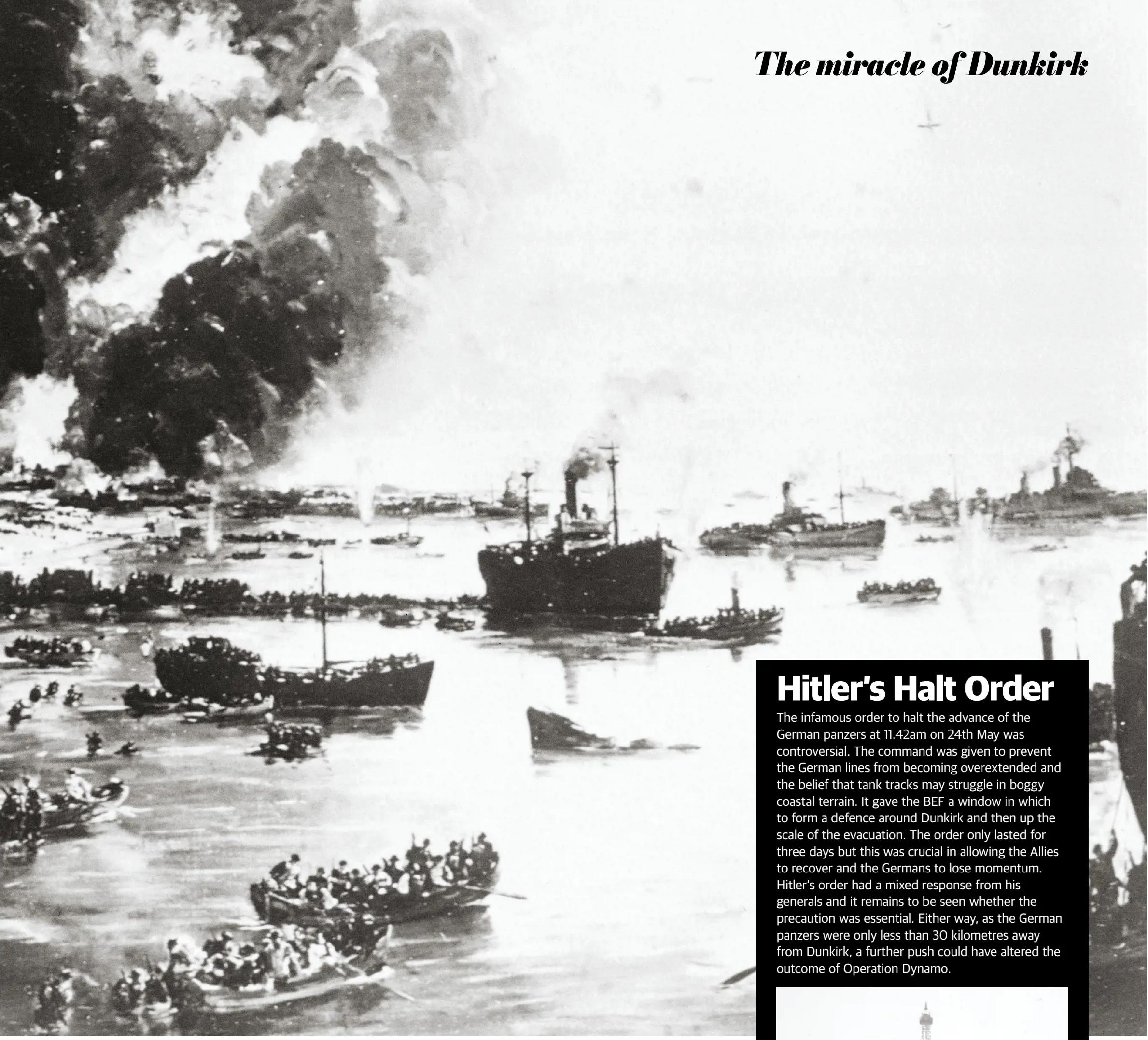
The Dunkirk spirit helped stiffen British resolve as the country now stood alone against Nazi Germany who turned their attention to an invasion of the British Isles

After the French surrender on 22nd June 1940, Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. A scintillating blitzkrieg had knocked France out of the war in a matter of months and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had only just escaped from continental Europe thanks to a hurried withdrawal across the English Channel. The miracle of Dunkirk was an incredible feat that gave Britain both the morale and the manpower required to continue the fight against the Third Reich. Without it, Britain would have stared down the barrel of defeat.

The eight month Phoney War came to an abrupt end in May 1940, as the German panzer divisions rolled into the Ardennes. Britain and France had agreed on a defensive strategy that would keep the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe at bay. Both countries were well aware of the threat that Hitler posed and had done all the appeasement they possibly could to avoid another war. The invasion of Poland finally brought them both into conflict and now Hitler turned his attention to Western Europe. The French Army had a reputation as one of the best in the world and what they believed to be a near-impenetrable defensive fortification called the Maginot Line stretched across its eastern border, while the BEF would protect the Low Countries from invasion. Nine months after the German invasion of Poland, three German Army groups made their advance on 10th May 1940, the same day Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister. The German plan was for Army Group A to hurtle through the Ardennes, a hilly, wooded area of France, B would take care of the Netherlands and Belgium, while C would keep tabs on the Maginot Line. The attack was a masterstroke by Hitler and caught the Allies completely by surprise. Both the British and the French had severely underestimated the strength of the German war machine, especially the armoured divisions, and were shocked at the speed and the ferocity of the German advance through the Ardennes, an area believed to be too densely forested for tanks.

> "The French in particular were poorly organised, the result of too much money and attention being spent on the Maginot Line"

The neutral Netherlands surrendered within a week; the white flag being waved after the intense bombing of Rotterdam had claimed the lives of 1,000 civilians. The Allied armies soon withdrew from Belgium too under Plan D, a strategy to let Belgium be invaded before beginning the fight back. The French and British were under the command of Generals Pierre Billotte, Alphonse



Hitler's Halt Order

The infamous order to halt the advance of the German panzers at 11.42am on 24th May was controversial. The command was given to prevent the German lines from becoming overextended and the belief that tank tracks may struggle in boggy coastal terrain. It gave the BEF a window in which to form a defence around Dunkirk and then up the scale of the evacuation. The order only lasted for three days but this was crucial in allowing the Allies to recover and the Germans to lose momentum. Hitler's order had a mixed response from his generals and it remains to be seen whether the precaution was essential. Either way, as the German panzers were only less than 30 kilometres away from Dunkirk, a further push could have altered the outcome of Operation Dynamo.

Georges and Maurice Gamelin, who were constantly at odds with each other. The French in particular were poorly organised, the result of too much money and attention being spent on the Maginot Line, which was simply outflanked by the Germans. This coupled with poor communication lines, obsolete tactics and a poorly trained and poorly equipped BEF, left the Allies exposed. On 16th May, Brussels had fallen. The British and French forces were being pushed further west and there was real concern that the dual Wehrmacht attack through the Low Countries and the Ardennes would split the Allied forces in two. Between 16th and 21st May, German panzer divisions sped rapidly through France, making up 80 kilometres of ground as the British and the French carried out a fighting retreat. Army Group A now held three vital bridgeheads over the River Meuse as the Germans poured further and further west. With the Battle of France seemingly lost already, plans for the evacuation of the BEF got underway, a massive shock to Churchill who, with little communication on the events, had expected the BEF to hold its ground.

Despite their overwhelming success, the German panzers were in need of repair. On 23rd May, Commander Gerd von Rundstedt requested permission for a halt from Hitler who agreed with fears that the front, which is now was as far west as the Somme, could become overextended. This gave the BEF valuable time to begin the evacuation. The three day respite was short lived as the port of Boulogne fell on 25th May. The Allied armies were getting squeezed to the

The Dunkirk spirit helped stiffen British resolve as the country now stood alone against Nazi Germany, who turned her attention to the planned invasion of the British Isles

> "The hurried withdrawal meant troops had to wade into the cold water of the Channel, as deep as their necks"

coast and the next day Operation Dynamo was ordered. Devised by Vice-Admiral Bertram Ramsay and directed from his headquarters in Dover, the withdrawal had been mooted since 20th May and was expected to save, at most, 45,000 men. It began at 7pm that evening. On the continent, the BEF were led by Lord Gort, who had withdrawn to Dunkirk without informing his French or Belgian allies. Initially, the operation was only intended to be a partial evacuation as there was still hope that the majority of the BEF would be able to join with the remainder of the French armies in a counterattack. This belief was a vain hope more than anything and aside from an attack on Arras on 21st May, which did little except buy a bit of time, the British and French were still engaging in a fighting retreat.

For the evacuation, the British mustered a flotilla of 1,000 vessels. Beside the Royal Navy destroyers were an assortment of civilian vessels. Manned by a mixture of civilian and navy crews, cross-channel ferries, pleasure steamers and cabin cruisers were all readied for the journey across the Channel. These 'little ships' (the smallest of all was the tiny 4.4 metre long Tamzine) comprised a volunteer force that demonstrated the British fighting spirit. 900 in all made the journey in a story that has since become historical legend. Overnight on the 26th May, 8,000 BEF troops were safely evacuated. The hurried withdrawal meant troops had to wade into the cold water of the Channel, sometimes as deep as their necks, for them to reach the smaller boats that would then ferry them to the larger vessels in the flotilla. As more and more companies made it to the coast, lines of men began to litter the beaches, awaiting the next vessel out of Dunkirk. The next day, Calais fell to the Germans as the pressure started to increase on the evacuation to get as many of the BEF as possible back to Britain before the blitzkrieg made it to the coast. 25,000 soldiers departed overnight on the 27-28th May as the withdrawal picked up more momentum. The port of Dunkirk had been reduced to ruin by the Luftwaffe so the extraction had to be done from the beaches, although British destroyers were at points able to utilise a long causeway called the Eastern Mole at the entrance of Dunkirk harbour. This had deeper water that they could sail into without fear of running aground and becoming vulnerable.

The defensive perimeter around Dunkirk was getting smaller by the day but in a turn of events, the German land attack stopped. Wary of the prospect of losing more men to the French garrison protecting the beaches, Hitler instructed Göring's Luftwaffe to finish the job. The coast was bombed heavily as Stukas and Dorniers strafed the beaches with machine gun fire. Although the BEF were sitting ducks, poor coordination, adverse weather conditions and the sand deadening the impact of bombs prevented the Germans from landing a potential death blow on the BEF. The RAF also helped matters. Often criticised for their lack of input during the events of Dunkirk, they managed to down around 100 Luftwaffe aircraft, four German planes for every British plane, but could not stop the majority of the bombing. Göring failed to complete the task assigned to him and not for the last time in the war.

On the final day of May, it was Gort's turn to leave France and 68,000 men had now been safely evacuated. Many of the troops had spent days huddled on the beaches but slowly and surely the withdrawal was succeeding. Both the destroyers and the little ships were unable to take any heavy equipment on board so the majority of BEF vehicles and heavy weaponry was left strewn across the shoreline. This loss of vehicles actually caused a shortage in Britain that lasted

The Dutch city of Rotterdam was heavily bombed. The Netherlands surrendered to the Germans the next day

The miraculous escape from France

1940

The Western Front re-opens
The Phoney War ends nine months after the invasion of Poland as the Wehrmacht cross the border into Belgium. Neville Chamberlain resigns as Prime Minister.
10th May 1940

Bombing of Rotterdam
The Dutch city of Rotterdam is heavily bombed with the Netherlands surrendering to the Germans the next day.
14th May 1940

Belgian withdrawal
Allied armies retreat from Belgium after the fall of Brussels, fearing that they will be caught in a pincer by the dual German advance from the north and the south.
16th May 1940

Operation Dynamo
Plans for the evacuation get underway as the Wehrmacht armoured divisions make up 80 kilometres of ground in under a week. A French counter-attack on Arras holds the Germans off.
20th May 1940

Halt Order called
Hitler's calls a stop to the panzer advance with the front now only 30 kilometres from Dunkirk. This gives the BEF vital time to begin the evacuation.
23rd May 1940

The evacuation begins
The day after Boulogne falls, 8,000 troops are taken back across the Channel overnight. The next day Calais falls as the race to leave France becomes a priority.
26th May 1940

BEF commander Lord Gort takes his leave of Dunkirk, one of 68,000 men now evacuated

until 1941. By June, the evacuation started to become more strained. The German air assault was becoming more devastating by the day as the port became blocked by the wrecks of sunken ships. The evacuation was now restricted to just hours of darkness. It wasn't just the BEF fleeing across the Channel anymore either. The British Tommies were now joined by French and Belgian soldiers, who had joined the evacuation, eager to reach the safety of Britain to regroup. Previously, only BEF soldiers had been allowed to leave on the boats but it was now a full Allied operation. On the 3rd June, the final men stepped onto the boats and slipped away into the darkness of the Channel. The evacuation was complete. On 4th June, Churchill addressed the House of Commons at 3.40pm. He praised the achievements of Dunkirk but warned that "wars are not won by evacuations". The address culminated in one his most famous speeches: "we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight in the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender"; the first of many passionate speeches to the House.

The German Sixth Army entered Dunkirk the same day as Churchill's resolute words rang around parliament. The beaches were strewn with corpses of the soldiers who hadn't made it, victims of Luftwaffe machine guns. The Führer's gaze had already turned to Paris and the remainder of France, confident that Britain, even with this successful evacuation completed, would soon capitulate after the loss of its major ally. The following day the Wehrmacht marched south towards Paris as 5 million French refugees fled south in search of safety. Wary of what had already happened to Rotterdam and Warsaw, the French capital was declared an open city and taken with little resistance. On 22nd June the Battle of France was over, the peace treaty signed at Versailles, where just 22 years earlier, France had sat at the table of victors of the Great War. Dunkirk was a huge feat, but it wasn't without loss. The Luftwaffe sunk six British and three French destroyers, and 161 of the brave little ships were now at the bottom of the Channel. In total 217 Allied vessels were sunk and 177 Allied aircraft were downed. The little ships had done their bit but it was ultimately the 39 British and French destroyers who ferried two-thirds of the men off the beaches. In total, 340,000 British, French, Belgian and Canadian troops had been evacuated to safety from Dunkirk and a total of 558,000 from ports all across France.

Britain was down but not out. The failure of the BEF to stem the Wehrmacht advance was testament to the strength of the blitzkrieg but also advertised how ill-prepared the British and French were for this lightning war. Dunkirk could have been a failure but this successful withdrawal of troops gave hope to what was left of the western Allies to fight on. It may not have been a victory but critically for Churchill, it hadn't been a rout. Newspapers across Britain were hailing it as a miracle but there were negatives. Soldiers returned with low morale, disheartened that they simply could not cope with the strength of the German panzers and convinced that the invasion of Britain was not far off. There were even reports of desertion and infighting at Dunkirk with British soldiers forcing their French counterparts off the boats. This is known as the myth of Dunkirk, that the evacuation was deemed much more of a success than it actually was.

The facts are that if the evacuation was not made, Britain would have had huge numbers of POWs and would have been on the verge of reluctant peace terms with Hitler. As Hitler had his photo taken in front of the Eiffel Tower, the plans for the invasion of mainland Britain, were underway. The French General Weygand remarked that "in three weeks, England will have her neck wrung like a chicken." The battle for France was over and the battle for Britain was about to begin.

Evacuations weren't just limited to Dunkirk; Allied soldiers were taken back to Britain from many French towns

19,000 more
As the perimeter around Dunkirk is held, 19,000 more BEF soldiers make their escape but the majority of heavy equipment is left scattered across the beaches.
28th May 1940

Gort leaves
BEF commander Lord Gort takes his leave of Dunkirk, one of 68,000 men now evacuated.
31st May 1940

Overnight withdrawal
As the Luftwaffe bombardment escalates, evacuations are limited to just night-time hours under the cover of darkness.
1st June 1940

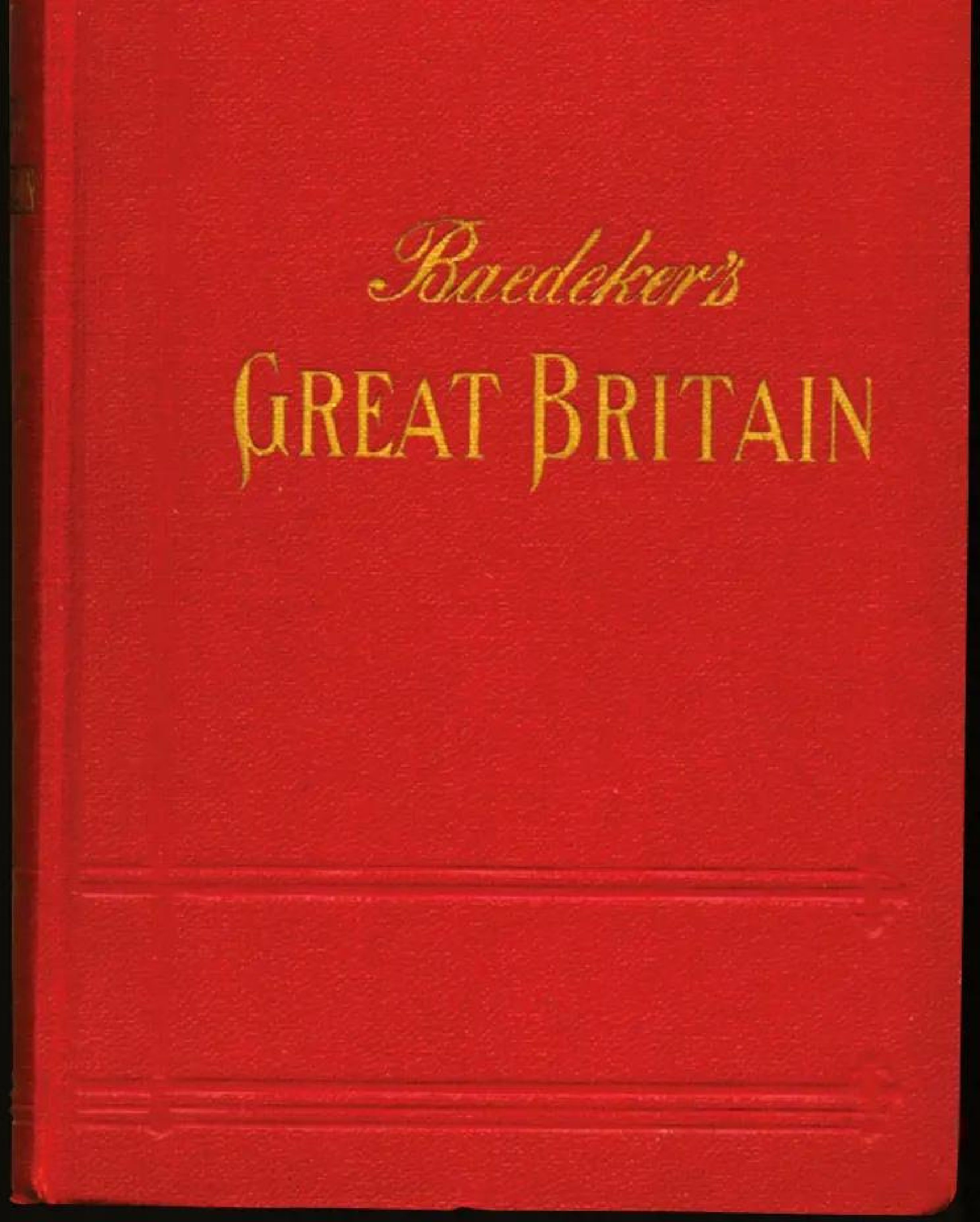
The final night
The final night of the evacuation and 340,000 British, Belgian and French troops have now been saved.
3rd June 1940

German Dunkirk
Just one day after the final Allied troops have made their escape, German soldiers enter Dunkirk and claim the port for their own. Churchill makes a rousing speech to the House of Commons.
4th June 1940

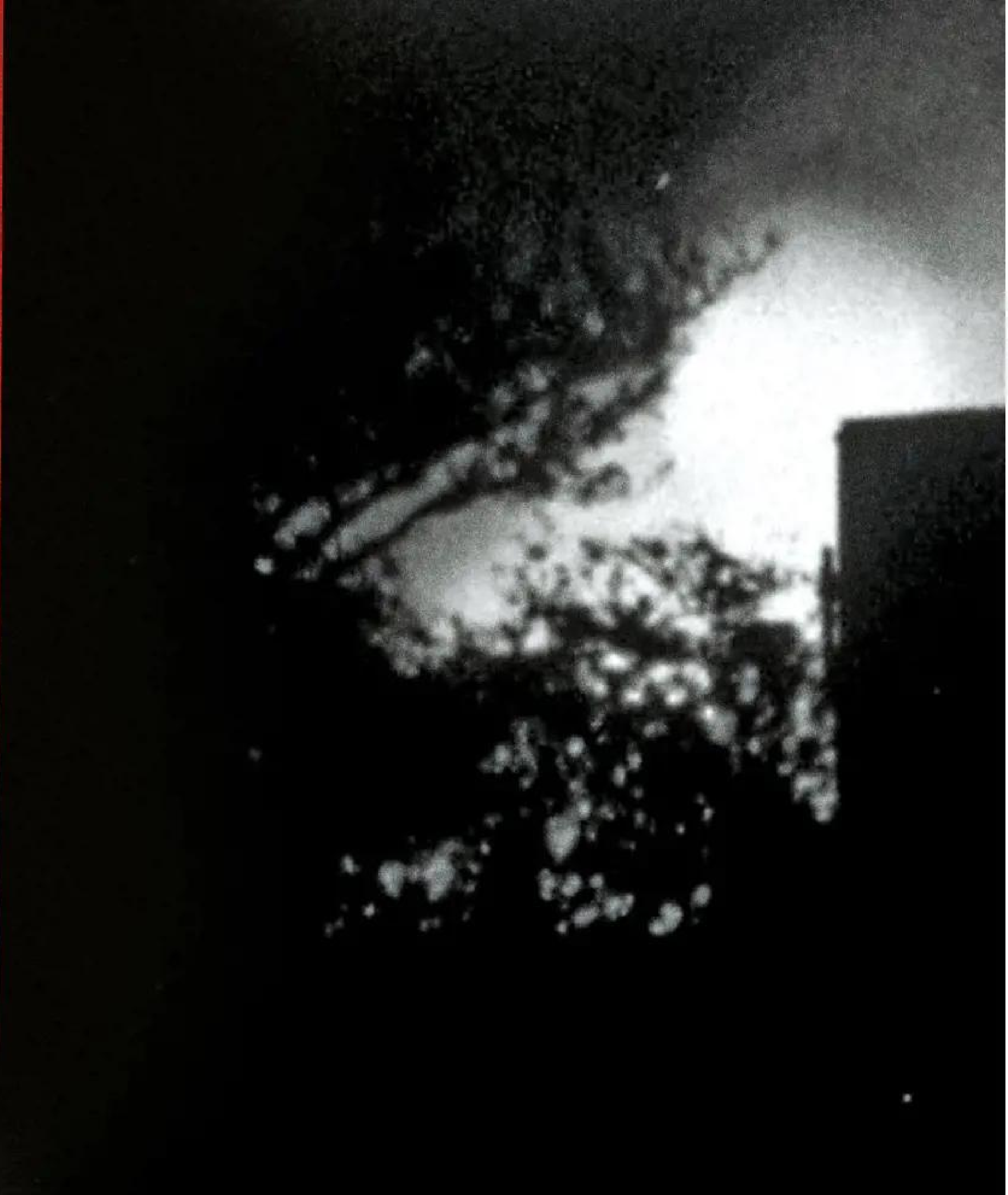
The Battle of France resumes
Turning south, Hitler orders the Wehrmacht to invade the remainder of northern France and to take any remaining soldiers prisoner.
5th June 1940

French government moved to Tours
With Paris now threatened, the French Government leave Paris to set up a new base in Tours.
10th June 1940

French surrender
Hitler orders peace terms and the French agree, signing the documents at Versailles. The Battle of France is over.
22nd June 1940



Right: Baedeker's famous red-covered guides were a common sight on bookshelves in both Germany and Britain throughout the 19th and 20th centuries



HITLER'S HOLIDAY TOUR FROM HELL

UNLEASHING THE BAEDEKER BLITZ

How a travel guide gave the Nazis a steer on which areas of Britain should be bombed for being beautiful

On 13th May 2016, builders working at a former junior school in Bath were digging up what had once been a children's playground when they came across something sinister. As they cleared the earth away from the metre-long metal cylinder it became clear that what they were looking at was a terrifying relic from a darker age: an unexploded, 250-kilogram German bomb that had been dropped in April 1942. A bomb that still had the potential to obliterate anything within a 50-metre radius.

Army explosive experts dealt with the bomb safely, but its discovery unearthed a story that had been buried for nearly 75 years - the events of the so-called Baedeker raids. The Blitz Hitler's Luftwaffe unleashed against Britain during World War II is well known for targeting, as it did, large metropolitan areas of military or industrial importance. London was pounded because of its docks, Coventry for its aircraft plants, Newcastle for its shipyards - but what was so special about Bath? After all, the city hadn't been of military significance since Roundheads and Royalists had gone toe-to-toe there in 1643 at the height of the English Civil War centuries before.

So why did Hitler - who (by the time that bomb was dropped) was fighting a gargantuan, unwinnable war against the Soviet Union - commit vital resources to an attack on a place that was better known for its tea rooms than its military targets? The answer lies nearly 900 miles to the east in the German city of Lübeck on the Baltic Sea coast...

Britain's RAF had first bombed Germany in an audacious, morale-raising raid on 25 August 1940. Berlin was the target and although it'd caused scant damage, a huge psychological blow had been dealt. Despite Luftwaffe boss Hermann Göring's boast just a year before that not one enemy bomb would fall on German soil, it'd been proven that the country wasn't immune to air attacks.

Not that those attacks would initially amount to much. When the war started, the RAF had just 280 light bombers made up of planes such as the Whitworth Whitley, which had carried out the Berlin raid. These planes were ill-suited to the key role that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had dreamt up for the RAF's Bomber Command.

With Britain's army swept ingloriously into the sea at Dunkirk, and without a foothold in continental Europe, aerial bombing was - Churchill believed - Britain's best hope of hitting back at the Third Reich. "The [RAF's] fighters may be our salvation," he declared in 1940 shortly after Spitfires and Hurricanes had seen off the German invasion during the Battle of Britain, "but the bombers alone provide us with the means of victory." Germany, he'd decided, could be blasted into submission.

To complete the task, a new breed of heavy bomber was rushed into production, most noticeably the Avro Lancaster, and, in 1942,

"Why did Hitler – who was fighting a gargantuan, unwinnable war against the Soviet Union – commit vital resources to an attack on a place that was better known for its tea rooms than its military targets?"

As well as the many homes and schools destroyed, the York Guildhall was set ablaze during the raid on the city

Above:
Air Chief Marshall 'Bomber' Harris who ordered the attack on Lübeck – the raid that prompted the Baedeker Blitz

a new ruthless supremo was appointed as head of Bomber Command, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Travers Harris; the man history would remember as 'Bomber' Harris. Churchill now had the right machines to flatten Germany, and in Harris he had a man who would get the job done. Now all he needed was official licence to pursue a policy of total war and, on 14th February 1942, the British government issued the Area Bombing Directive to the RAF, giving it the mandate to go after civilian targets as a matter of policy. Almost immediately, Harris set about turning Churchill's vision of laying waste to Germany into a reality. He decided Lübeck was where he'd test out his new ideas about strategic area bombing first.

Although a port, Lübeck was a cultural centre and of little military significance. As such it was barely defended and Harris saw in the elegant town, famed for its medieval architecture, a soft, low-risk target. The date of the raid was set for the night of 28th March 1942 when seasonal and climatic conditions were favourable. There had be a full moon so the waters that fed the city – the Elbe-Lübeck Canal, the Trave and Wakenitz rivers – would all be lit up like landing strips, while the seasonal hoar-frost would ensure clear visibility. Lübeck, quite literally, could not be missed by the British bombers.

"Bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide"
- Baron Gustav Braun von Stumm

As Harris later noted in his memoirs, "Lübeck was the first German city to go up in flames. It was not a vital target, but it seemed to me better to destroy an industrial town of moderate importance than to fail to destroy a large industrial city. The main object of the attack was to learn to what extent a first wave of aircraft could guide a second wave to the aiming point by starting a conflagration: I ordered a half an hour interval between the two waves in order to allow the fires to get a good hold before the second wave arrived. In all, 234 aircraft were dispatched and dropped 144 tonnes of incendiaries and 160 tonnes of high explosives. At least half of the town was destroyed, mainly by fire. It was conclusively proved that even the small force I had then could destroy the greater part of a town of secondary importance," 'Bomber' Harris explained.

With so few defences, some of Harris' bombers had attacked from just 600 metres – 2,400 metres lower than they'd usually bomb from – devastating the town. Blockbuster bombs – powerful enough to shake the roofs off of houses – were dropped by the first wave starting the initial fires, while incendiary bombs were then scattered over the roofless buildings by the second wave, setting the city ablaze. Around 62 per cent of all buildings in Lübeck were affected by the bombing, causing around 1,000 casualties and 15,000 people to lose their homes.

"The damage is really enormous," Nazi Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary a few days after the attack. "I've been shown a newsreel of the destruction. One can well imagine how such a bombardment affects the population. We can't get away from the fact that the English air raids have increased in scope and

Saved from the bonfire

Why the Baedeker Guides were so revered by the Nazis and how they were used for ideological ends

One of the most powerful images associated with the Nazi era is that of public book burnings. Organised by German students, they saw gangs of young fanatics flinging works of 'subversive' literature onto giant bonfires during dramatic night-time ceremonies. The works torched were those deemed too Jewish, left-wing, pacifist, or un-German. In reality, this meant that anything some local swastika-sporting crank decided was 'immoral' ended up on the pyres, and thousands of books were destroyed this way. The Baedeker Guides, though, were never among them.

These guides – named after Karl Baedeker, the Prussian publisher who founded the brand and passed it down to his sons – had been around since 1827, and by the rise of National Socialism were very much part of German national life. Their popularity, though, wasn't just down to the maps, timetables and tourist insights they offered. The guides, which were very much products of the Imperial age, were also stuffed full of stereotypical nonsense that the Nazis in particular could approve of, namely Germans equal good, foreigners equal indolent, untrustworthy or smelly. In fact, the Nazis not only rubber-stamped the Baedeker Guides, but actually commissioned several including a guidebook for the German Army of Occupation in Poland, while helping to 'edit' others as they saw fit.

They also restricted to whom the various guides could be sold. Despite the firm's Leipzig offices being destroyed during an air raid on 4th December 1943, the company survived the war and continues to publish to this day – although its well-respected guides now offer a more balanced view of the world and its citizens.

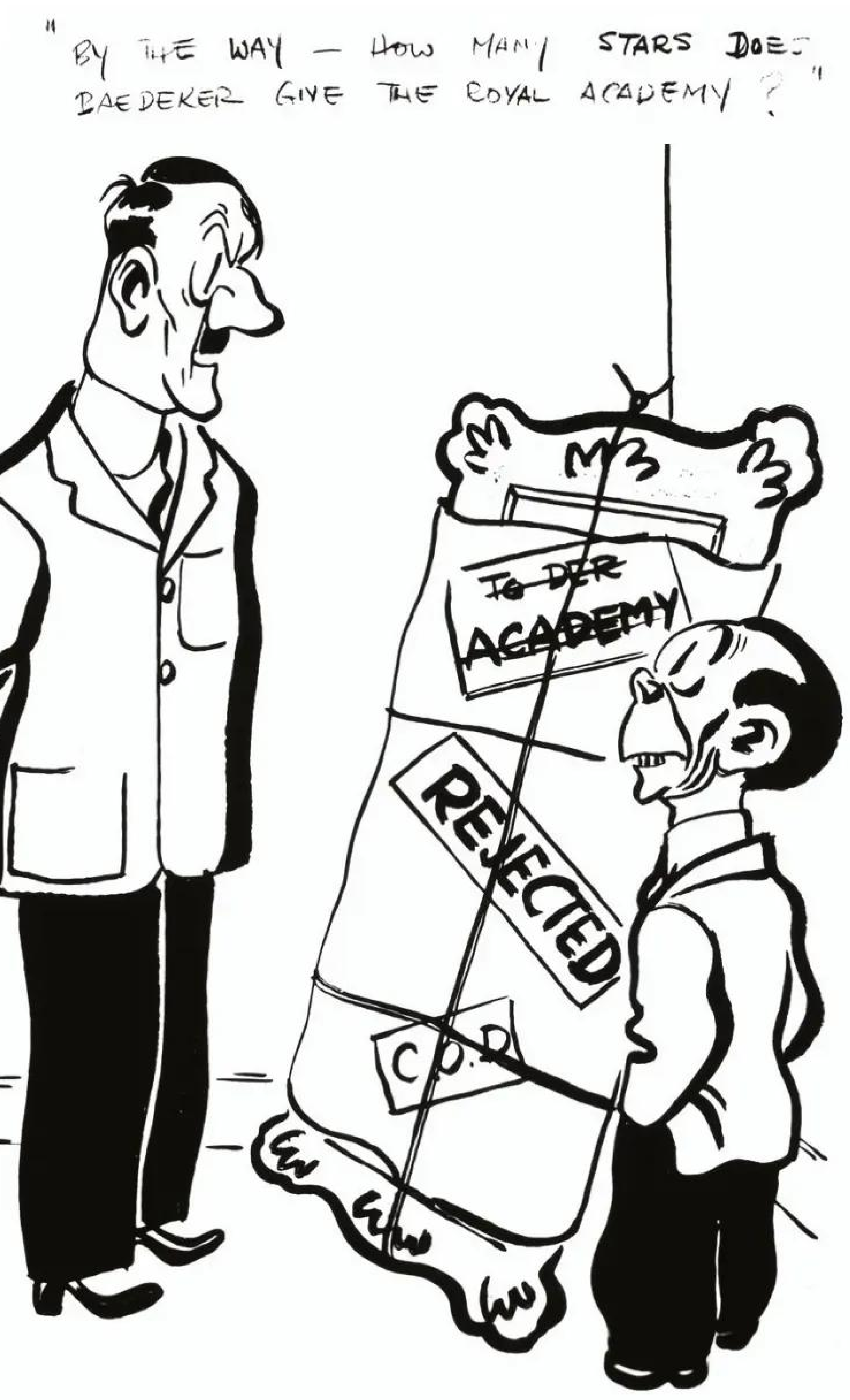
German students burning books deemed a threat to the Nazi state in 1933. The Baedeker Guides weren't among them, but they were used by Nazi propagandists importance. It's horrible. If they can be continued on these lines, they might conceivably have a demoralising effect on the population."

With private concerns about how the Lübeck raid and others like it might wear down the resolve of the German population, the Nazis began plotting retaliatory attacks. Of course, Germany had already tried bombing Britain into submission once before. Its nine-month Blitz of the country had brought widespread urban destruction but had fundamentally failed to break morale. The whole costly, seemingly pointless exercise had eventually come to an end in May 1941, when the Luftwaffe – in the build-up to the following month's invasion of the Soviet Union – had the vast bulk its resources diverted eastward.

By early 1942, what remained of Hitler's air force in the west was no longer in a position to mount a sustained, large-scale, aerial offensive. It could, however, launch as Goebbels put it, "Rigorous reprisal raids [on] centres of culture, especially those with little anti-aircraft defences."

The first city to be attacked was the quiet cathedral city of Exeter in Devon, when German bombs smashed into it on the night of 23-24th April. Up until then Exeter's inhabitants had been largely untouched by the war. They now found themselves on the front line with 73 civilians killed and 20 seriously injured. It was a menacing foretaste of what was to come.

The day after the first Exeter raid, German propagandist Baron Gustav Braun von Stumm released


"BY THE WAY — HOW MANY STARS DOES BAEDEKER GIVE THE ROYAL ACADEMY?"
M3
~~TO DER~~
ACADEMY
REJECTED
C.O.D.

Above: The Baedeker Blitz caught the public's imagination both in Germany and Britain, where it was soon mocked by newspaper cartoonists

Guide to destruction

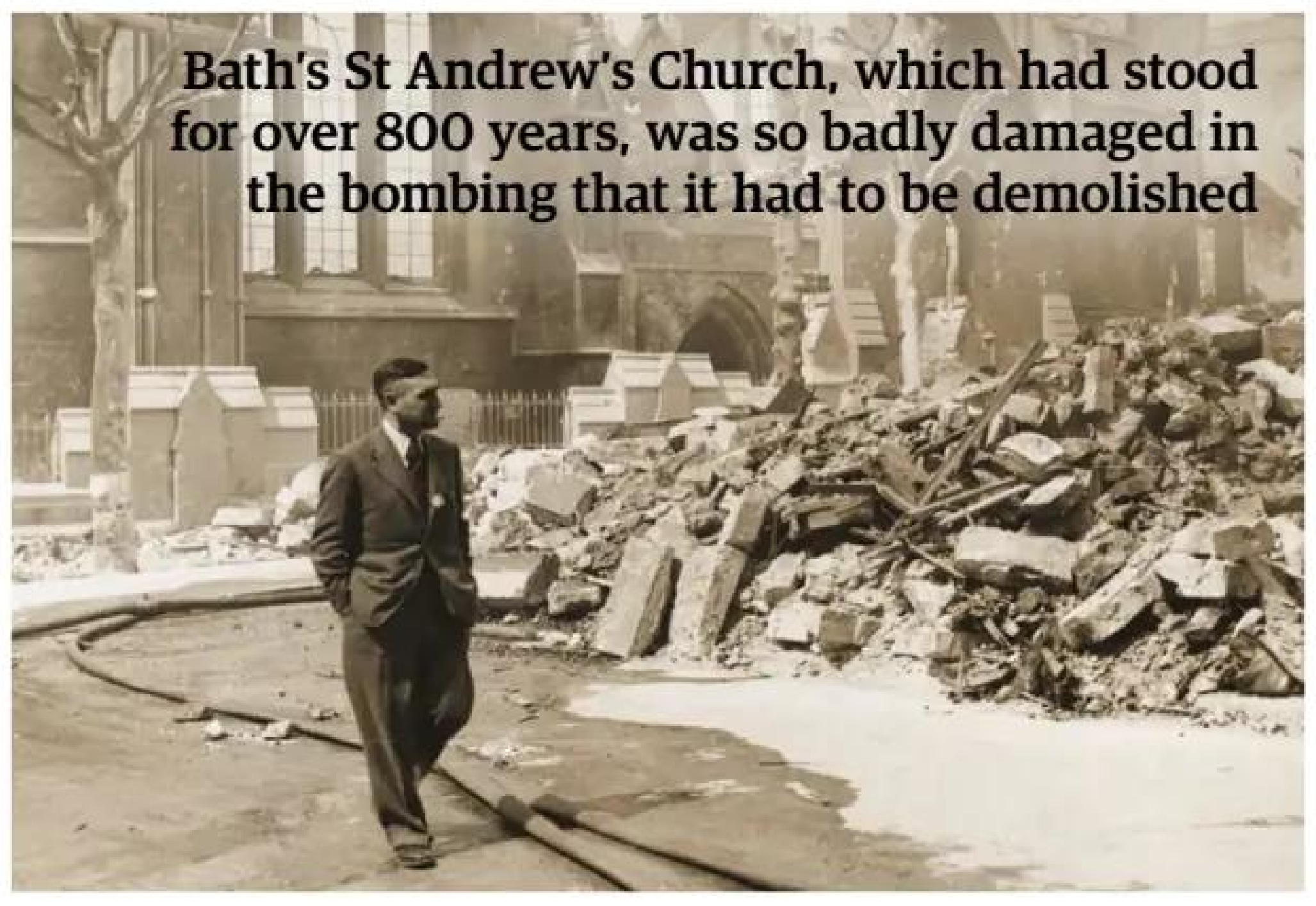
How the guide may have helped Hitler decide which cities to bomb...

Of all the countries covered by the Baedeker Guides, Britain fared the best. The reasons were threefold. First, the original guides were inspired by a series of travel books produced by English publisher John Murray, which had pioneered the genre. Second, Britain, as the greatest power of the Victorian age, was seen as the cultural benchmark for other countries – a nascent Germany included – to aspire to. Finally, by the 20th century, Britain was the second biggest consumer of Baedeker Guides after Germany, with many translated into English. In fact, the phrase 'baedekering' even briefly entered the English language as a term for travelling through a country in order to write about it, at the height of the Victorian vogue for travelogues.

The books included maps and detailed information on routes, accommodation and attractions and from 1846 onwards used an innovative star system to rate them – making them very much the first modern tourist guidebooks. It was this star system that Baron von Stumm was referring to when he described how the Nazis would now, "Bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide." Here's what the 1937 Guide To Great Britain had to say about three of the cities the Nazis attempted to flatten.

Bath 25-26th April 1942

"The chief winter spa in Britain is a handsome city of 68,000 inhabitants... is unrivalled among provincial English towns for its combination of archaeological, historic, scenic and social interest. It is a city of crescents and terraces, built in a substantial Palladian style of 'Bath Stone', and rising tier above tier to a height of about 6,000 feet. Bath owes its external appearance largely to the architect John Wood and is an admirable specimen of 18th-century town planning."



Bath's St Andrew's Church, which had stood for over 800 years, was so badly damaged in the bombing that it had to be demolished

DAMAGE Approximately 417 killed, and 19,000 buildings destroyed

Norwich 27-28th April, 8-9th May 1942

"The cathedral preserves its original Norman structure more than any other English cathedral. It possesses numerous other interesting buildings, too. Overall, Norwich is charming, beautiful and especially admirable." As well as going into detail about the many delights Norwich can offer, it also includes a detailed map of the city showing the position of its Norman castle and cathedral, as well as its 15th-century Guildhall. All of these were damaged in the first raid on the night of 27-28th April.

Below: A church service is held in the bombed out remains of Norwich Cathedral which was damaged during the April air raids

DAMAGE More than 850 killed or wounded, over 20,000 houses destroyed

York 28-29th May 1942

"An ancient city with 84,800 inhabitants and the capital of Yorkshire. It is situated on the River Ouse, in the centre of the wide and fertile Vale of York. The ancient walls are still standing, many of the streets are crooked and narrow, and there are quite a few quaint, old houses." The accompanying map of the city shows the magnificent 15th-century Guildhall, the Victorian railway station, and a medieval church, all of which were set ablaze during the raids.

Right: York railway station was hit during the raid, as was the 10.15am train from King's Cross to Edinburgh, which was laden with passengers

DAMAGE 92 killed, Hundreds wounded, 9,500+ buildings damaged or destroyed

Left: An air raid warden cradles a homeless child in their arms following the Baedeker raid on Norwich

a statement declaring it a success and warning that the Nazis would now, "Go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide." This reference to the popular German travel guides of the same name made for a neat sound bite that captured the public's imagination. It also infuriated von Stumm's boss, Goebbels, who was keen to sell the British attacks as acts of terrorism, while the German response was to be spun as even-handed and justified – not a deliberate attempt to destroy Britain's cultural treasures. But that's exactly what the raids were intended to do, and the phrase 'The Baedeker Blitz' was born.

On 26th April, after Harris launched another devastating raid – this time against the Baltic port of Rostock – Hitler addressed the Reichstag in Berlin's Kroll Opera House, promising retribution. "If in England the idea should prevail of carrying

"May this man not again wail and whimper if I am now forced to give a response that will bring much suffering to his own people. From now on, I will retaliate blow for blow until this criminal falls and his work dies"- Adolf Hitler

Dornier Do 217 heavy bombers like these did much of the bombing during the Baedeker Blitz

on air warfare against the civilian population with new methods," he thundered, "then I should like right now to state the following to the whole world… May [Churchill] not again wail and whimper if I am now forced to give a response that will bring much suffering to his own people. From now on, I will retaliate blow for blow until this criminal falls and his work dies."

He was true to his word, and that same night Bath was hit. The city, which was completely undefended, was soon set ablaze. The raid killed 417 people and left 19,000 buildings destroyed or damaged including the city's splendid Georgian Assembly Rooms (Which were restored in 1963).

As with the Exeter raids, this attack was largely carried out by between 30-40 Dornier 217 heavy bombers from Luftflotte 3, each one capable of carrying a bomb payload in the region of 3,000 kilograms. As before, two sorties were flown with each raid separated by two to three hours. It was a pattern of terror and destruction that would be followed throughout the Baedeker Blitz. Goebbels, writing in his diary after the raids, noted that Hitler intended to, "Repeat these raids night after night until the English are sick and tired of terror attacks and he shares my opinion absolutely that cultural centres, health resorts and civilian centres must be attacked… There is no other way of bringing the English to their senses. They belong to a class of human beings with whom you can only talk after you have first knocked out their teeth."

The following night it was Norwich's turn to be bombed. Again, it was a city with next to no means

Battle of the Beams

How radio waves guided Baedeker bomber crews to their targets in the dark. And how Britain managed to stop them…

To help Luftwaffe crews navigate over Britain's blacked-out countryside at night, German engineers came up with something called knickebein. British intelligence first became aware of it when a German bomber downed in 1940 was searched and intel on board made mention of the curious word. Investigations revealed that knickebein ('crooked leg') was the codename for a new system that used radio waves to guide German pilots to their targets. The idea was simple: a single radio wave (or beam) was transmitted at Britain from mainland Europe. Using an adapted version of a tracking device known as the Lorenz system – used pre-war by commercial airlines to help guide planes into airports – the beam from a single transmitter would guide the bombers towards their target. A second beam, transmitted from another part of Europe, would cross the first beam at the point where the bombs were to be dropped. All a pilot need do was follow the first beam until he reached the intersection with the second beam. Used throughout the Blitz and during the Baedeker raids, this system and later higher-frequency versions were eventually rendered useless by the British countermeasures, which involved transmitting rogue beams to baffle German pilots.

The British first learned of the knickebein guidance system after discovering intel on a downed German bomber in 1940

of defending itself and one that represented no real military value. More than 90 tonnes of bombs smashed into the city, killing or wounding 850 people and destroying nearly 20,000 houses.

Eyewitness John Alpe was a seven-year-old boy at the time but vividly recalled the raid many years later for the BBC's 'WW2 People's War' project. "For me it started at around 11.30pm when I was awakened by the voice of my father, a WWI veteran, loudly shouting, 'Bombs, bombs!' The family was at that instant, in their beds, presumably sleeping. That is, mum and dad, two elder sisters and me. I was youngest and my dear mum must have grabbed me from bed and rapidly descended the stairs, entered the living room then took a restricted flying dive with me under our dining table. We were all just in time. The first wave of Luftwaffe aircraft were dropping their high explosive bombs, softening up the city for the later incendiary attack to take over with their devastating fiercely burning fires…"

York became the next target and was attacked the next night. By this stage of the war, air-raid sirens had been sounded nearly 800 times across the rooftops of this ancient northern city; almost all had been false alarms. When they screamed out again on the night of 28th April, many of city's inhabitants rolled over in bed and tried to go back to sleep. It was only when the streets started to explode around them that the vast majority then began to run –quite literally – for their lives.

Having unleashed their bombs, the largely unopposed German bombers now strafed the streets with machine gun fire as terrified civilians fled to the shelters. The raid lasted 90 minutes and at the end of it over 300 lay dead or wounded, including five nuns, killed when the roof of the 17th-century convent they were in collapsed. A further 9,500 buildings were damaged, including the 15th-century Guild Hall, a medieval church, and numerous schools.

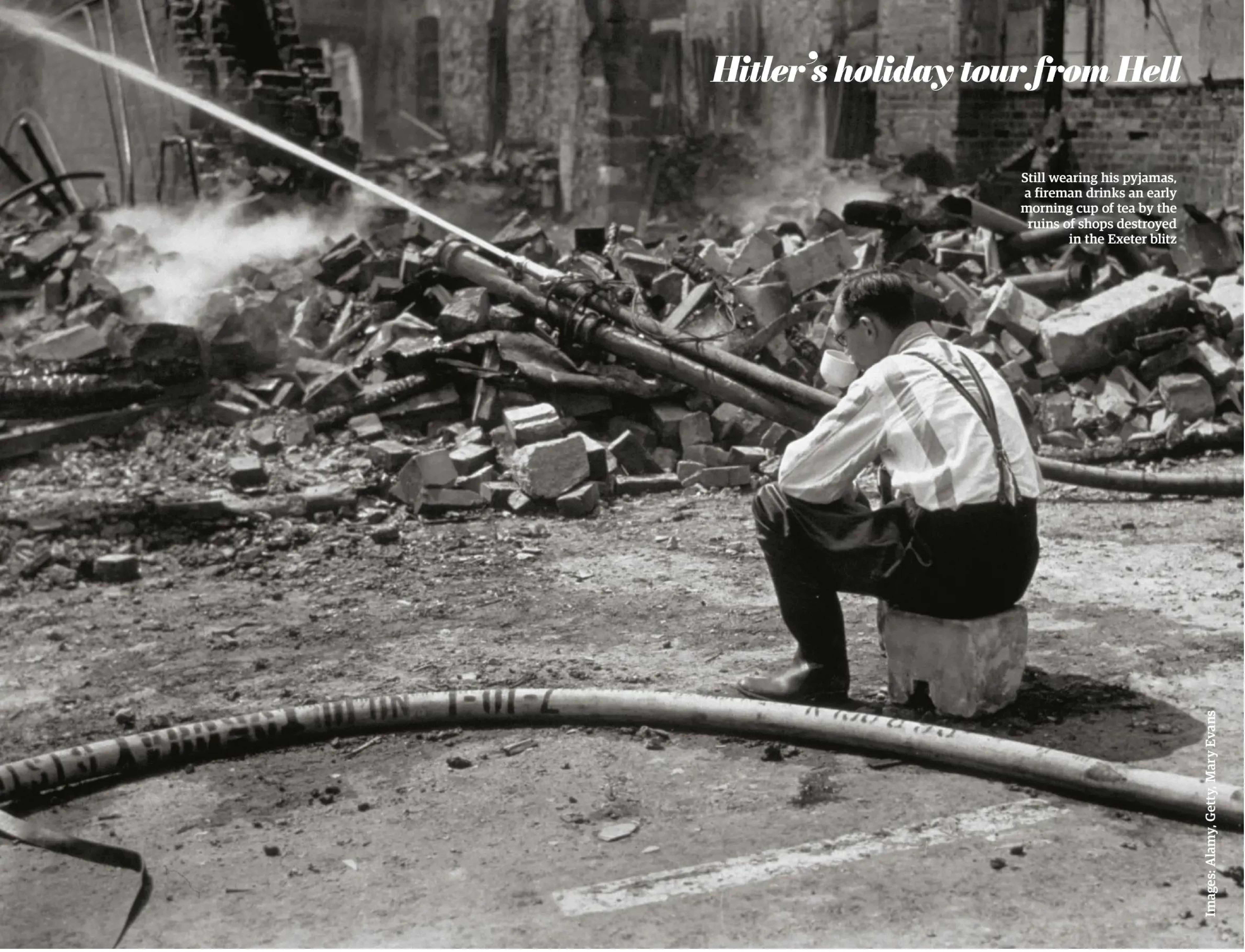
> "Exeter was the jewel of the West. We have destroyed that jewel and the Luftwaffe will return to finish the job"
>
> \- Lord Haw-Haw

No city in Britain, no matter how inconsequential to the country's war effort, could now consider itself safe from German attack. But a week later, it was Exeter – the original Baedeker target – that found itself bombed again. This time, though, the city would not escape so easily. On the night of 3-4th May 1942, German bombers attacked the city for the third time in ten days, dropping incendiary bombs and spewing machine gun fire into the streets. "It was a night of terror for the Exeter people," recorded German bomber pilot Ernst Von Kugel after the raid. "When I approached this town the bright reflections guided me. Over the town I saw whole streets of houses on fire, flames burst out of windows and doors, devouring the roofs.

"People were running everywhere and firemen were frantically trying to deal with flames," he continued. "It was a fantastic sight – no one who saw it will forget the greatness of the disaster. We thought of the thousands of men, women and children, the victims of our deadly visit, but we thought of our Führer and the command he gave: 'Revenge'. With cold calculation we carried out our orders."

For those on the ground, the scenes they encountered were far from fantastic – eyewitness Brian Pollard was 18 years old at the time: "We were woken by the air raid siren. Hearing the sound of explosions we thought it wise to dress and seek shelter in the basement; but we didn't get that far. The explosions seemed to come very near and we had a shower of incendiary bombs. The latter were 12-15 inches long and two or three inches in diameter. They contained magnesium and, on contact, burned white hot and spat burning fragments. Two such bombs came through the windows of the first floor front bedroom, already shattered by the explosions. We tried dousing them with water but the furnishings were soon blazing. I discovered that more incendiary bombs had come through the roof and the attic was well alight and also the buildings opposite and adjacent. There was nothing for it but to leave," he said, but that would prove to be a difficult undertaking for the family, and once there the shelter seemed to provide little cover.

"The nearest public air raid shelter was five hundred yards away," he continued. "It was hazardous and not without incident but by helping each other we reached the shelter as did many others. But it was more frightening inside the shelter than outside it, where at least the percussion of the



Still wearing his pyjamas, a fireman drinks an early morning cup of tea by the ruins of shops destroyed in the Exeter blitz

Images: Alamy, Getty, Mary Evans

explosions was more dispersed and you could see how near or far the falling masonry was. Burning buildings close by made it very hot inside the shelter, and the noise was coming from everywhere. Then came machine-gunning. The static tanks were perforated and several inches of water entered the shelter. Eventually, the planes retired, and although the fires continued to burn, people began to move. Then dawn came."

When Pollard and his family emerged from the darkness, they discovered their beautiful city was now a smoking, charred ruin. Over 1,500 houses had been destroyed, with a further 2,700 seriously damaged. A further 400 shops, 150 offices, 50-plus warehouses and 36 pubs and clubs had also vanished in a single night. As well as killing 156 civilians and injuring 563 more, 30 acres of the city were devastated with many of its ancient buildings smashed or incinerated. Its 15th-century cathedral had been badly damaged, while many of its Tudor, Georgian and Victorian landmarks were lost forever. The city library, meanwhile, had been reduced to a bonfire of smouldering embers along with an estimated 1 million books and historic documents. It would take Exeter more than 20 years to recover.

Of all the Baedeker raids, this one on Exeter was the most destructive. "Exeter was the jewel of the West," the English-speaking Nazi propagandist Lord Haw-Haw told British listeners during a broadcast on 4th May. "We have destroyed that jewel and the Luftwaffe will return to finish the job." The Luftwaffe did indeed return – on 8-9th May, to bomb Norwich in a raid that was significantly less effective thanks to radar and fighter cover. While the last raid most commonly associated with the Baedeker Blitz took place on 6 June when Canterbury (described in the Baedeker Guide To Great Britain as "The ecclesiastical metropolis of England,") was bombed for the third time in a week, the worst of the raids on the city took place on 1st June – seeing 3,600 incendiary bombs and 130 high explosive bombs dropped on it in attempt to destroy its historic cathedral. The 11th-century masterpiece survived thanks to firewatchers throwing hundreds of incendiary devices from its roof. Much of the city's medieval centre was, however, destroyed.

Although the Luftwaffe continued to make indiscriminate smaller scale raids on British towns, by the summer of 1942 the Baedeker Blitz was over. With the conflict against the Soviet Union taking on epic proportions, Hitler's already overstretched war machine could ill afford to commit precious resources to an aerial bombing campaign that seemed to have so little effect on the morale of the people it was supposedly terrorising. Britain had endured the Blitz. It had now endured the Baedeker raids, which had killed 1,637 civilians and destroyed or damaged over 50,000 homes as well as many buildings of cultural significance. Yet the spirit of its people seemed stronger than ever. As a tactic, the area bombing of a civilian population had been proven to be largely ineffective. The British knew this better than anyone and yet, under Churchill, doggedly persisted with the practice right up until the end of the war. In fact, a disproportionate amount of Britain's war effort was given to Bomber Command as it absorbed shockingly high casualty rates (around 50 per cent), just so that it could mete out what amounted to an increasingly murderous punishment of Germany's civilian population. This policy of annihilation would reach its dreadful apotheosis in the firestorm of Dresden in the dying days of the war.

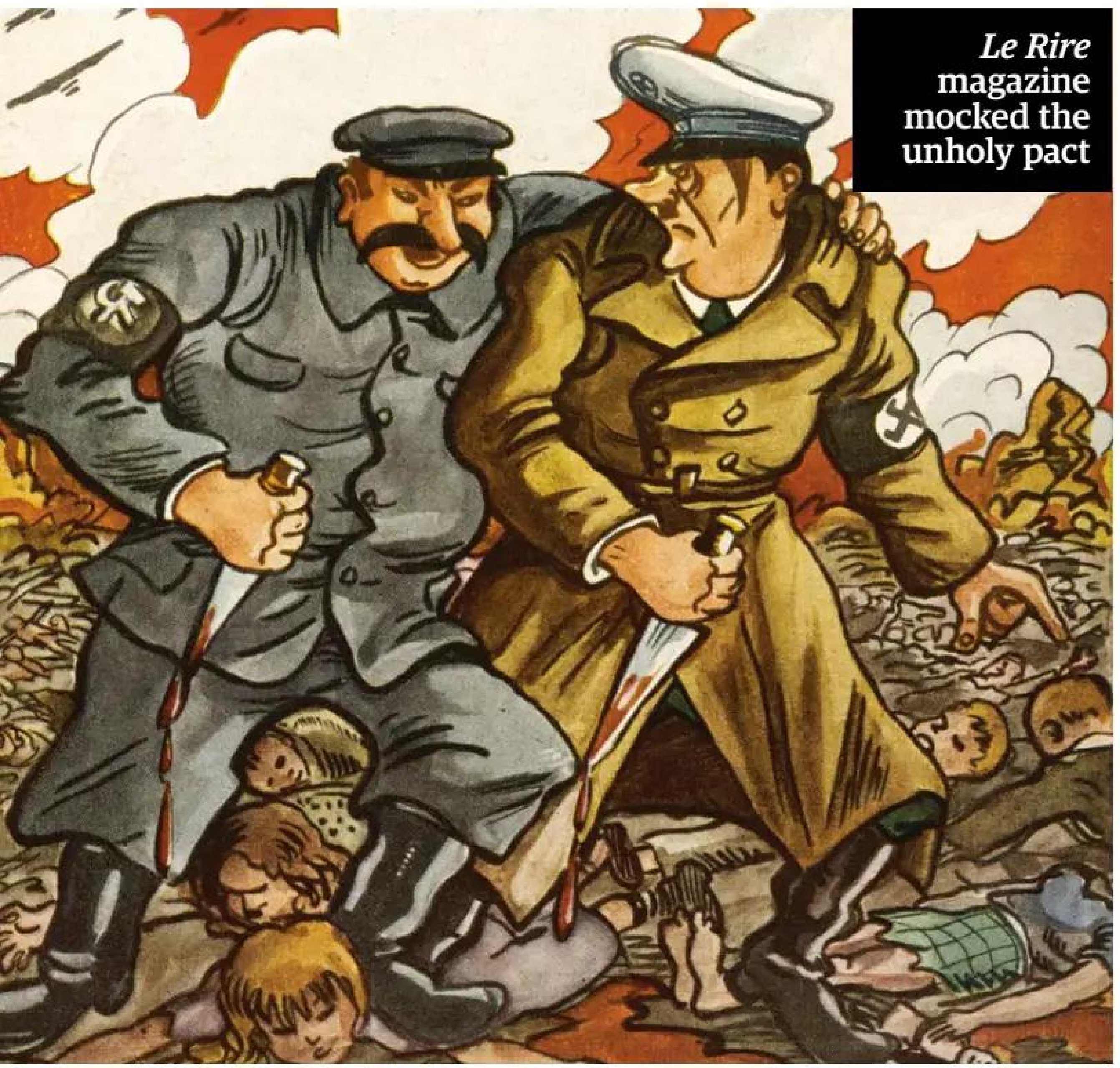
An Alliance with the Enemy

The Soviet Union was willing to side with anyone in its quest to survive the carnage of WWII

One of the most intriguing threads that ran throughout the course of World War II was the Soviet Union's pragmatic ability to switch its allegiances as events unfolded. It was a chameleonesque trait that would dramatically influence the course of the entire worldwide conflict.

As with many superpowers, the Soviet Union was born in the blood and ruin of war. In October 1917, Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks toppled the Russian Provisional Government, which had itself formed after the bloody overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II. The result of Lenin's push for power was the formation of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (Russian SFSR), and a merciless civil war which is estimated to have claimed between seven and 12 million lives.

Following the Red Army's (Bolshevik) victory over the counter-revolutionary forces of the White Army in 1922 (minor battles did continue into 1923), the communists formed the Soviet Union by uniting the Russian, Transcaucasian (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), Ukrainian and Byelorussian Republics. A 22.4 million square kilometre state was born, ruling over a population of approximately 160 to 170 million citizens, with Josef Stalin, the son of Georgian peasants, as its undisputed leader.



Le Rire magazine mocked the unholy pact

During Stalin's ruthless reign the Soviet Union's borders proved to be a contentious issue. The first major dispute occurred in 1935 as the relatively young state clashed with Japanese forces in the Chinese province of Manchuria. Preceded by numerous incidents where both the Soviet and Japanese patrols accidentally (and occasionally intentionally) violated the borders of this occupied region, this was in fact the first occasion in which guns were fired, and became known as the Halhamiao incident.

A series of clashes occurred over the following years, culminating in the decisive defeat of Japanese forces at the Battle of Khalkhin Gol in September 1939. Under the direction of Georgy Zhukov, the Red Army deployed tactics that would later prove invaluable in the fight against the German invasion. On 13th April 1941, the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact was signed, finally putting an end to a war that was never formerly declared by either side.

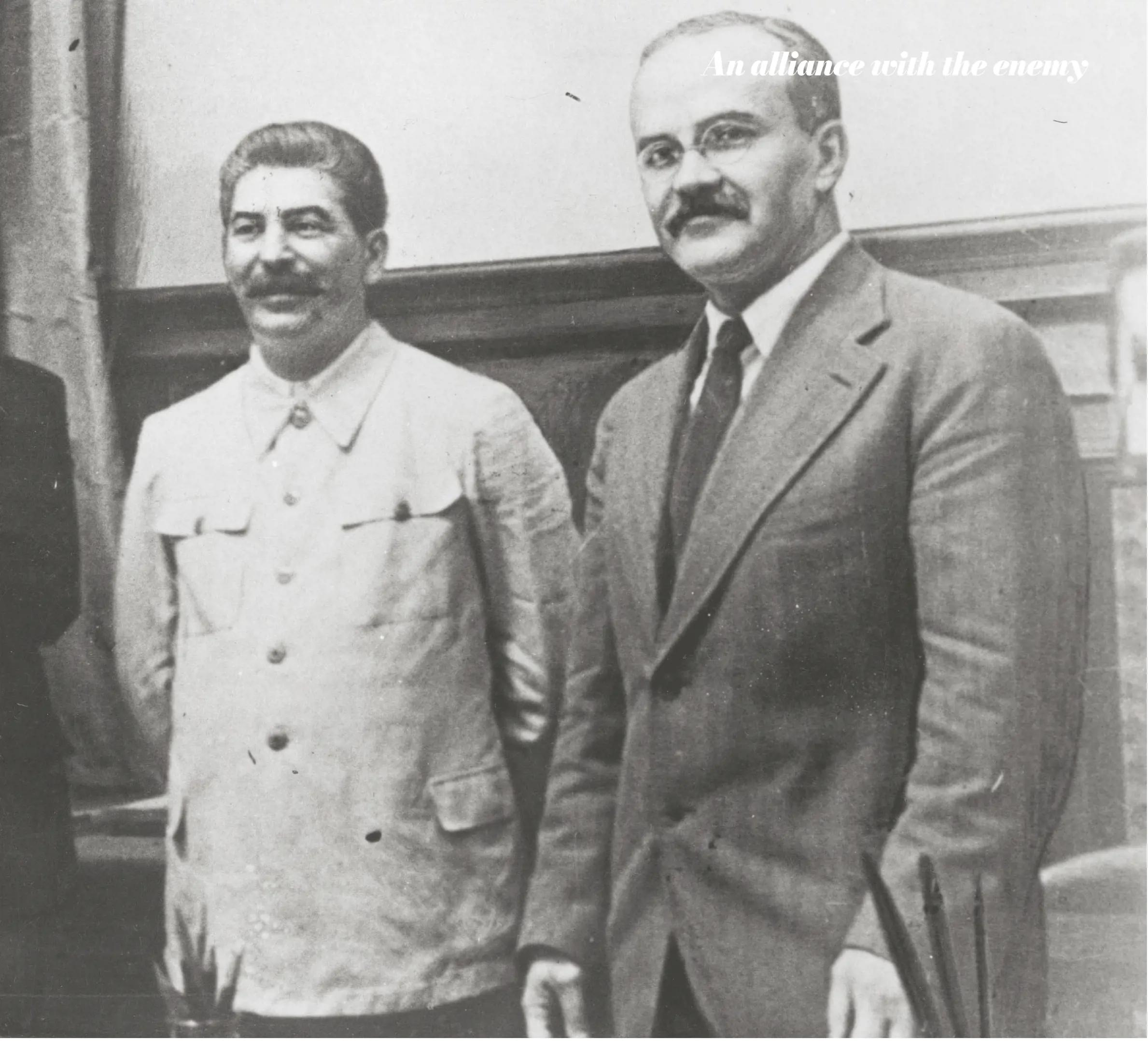
Even before its eastern borders had been settled, the Soviet Union had turned its gaze westwards to Poland and the mighty German state beyond it. The existence of a Polish state had been a contentious issue for Russia as far back as the Napoleonic era. Despite Hitler openly stating in his book *Mein Kampf* that the living space (lebensraum) that he believed Germany desperately needed lay in the east, and could only be taken by invading the Soviet territories, Stalin could not resist the temptation of discussing the division of Poland with the Nazis.

In a sign of the duplicitous nature of his government, the Soviets began secret talks with Germany while holding simultaneous discussions with Britain and France. With military and diplomatic ties between Germany and the Soviet Union all but severed, the deal adopted the guise of an economic agreement. As officials thrashed out its terms (a key one being a German loan of 200 million Reichsmarks to the Soviet Union at an interest rate of 4.5 per cent) the French and British delegates arrived in Moscow to talk over the military matters.

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939

Devils' pact

Fatefully for Poland, the talks fell apart due to Poland's refusal to allow Soviet troops to enter its territory in the event of a German attack. Their rebuttal was based on the very prescient assumption that once the Red Army crossed the



border, it would never leave. With an impasse reached on 21st August, Stalin decided to act quickly, hoping to conclude dealings with Germany. On 23rd August, the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, named after the Foreign Ministers of both countries, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov.

Its main term dictated that Poland was to be partitioned between the Germans and the Soviets, with the half east of the Vistula River handed to Stalin and Russia. Finland, Latvia, Estonia and Bessarabia were also chosen to enter the Soviet 'sphere of influence'.

On 1st September 1939, the Germans unleashed their vicious invasion of Poland, scything through the defences they encountered in a thrust towards Warsaw. But the Polish did not immediately capitulate, instead regrouping to mount a fierce, if ultimately doomed counter-attack. Unaware of the agreement that had already decided their fate, the Polish expected the Red Army to come to their aid. So, when the Soviets fulfilled their side of the bargain by invading Poland from the east on 17th September, they were greeted in some parts of Poland as liberators.

> "When the Soviets fulfilled their side of the bargain by invading Poland, they were greeted in some parts as liberators"

This not unreasonable assumption had resulted in the bulk of the Polish Army (which by this point consisted of around 750,000 men) being sent westwards to confront the Germans. This left approximately 20,000 troops to watch the eastern borders. With reports placing the strength of the Soviet invasion force between 450,000 and 1 million men, it's easy to see why these valiant Polish soldiers never stood a chance.

Both the Germans and the Soviets immediately set about dismantling the apparatus of the Polish state. Intriguingly, the Nazis viewed the

Parade at Brest-Litovsk

The German-Soviet military parade in Brest-Litovsk was symbolic for many reasons. First, it was the city in which the Russians had signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk during World War I, ending their participation in the conflict. The terms of the treaty were largely dictated by the Germans, and inflicted on the Russians. Holding a joint military parade in this location 19 years later was not a coincidence.

It also provided both sides with an opportunity to show the world that Poland was beyond saving. Holding it six days before the Polish formally surrendered proved that the fate of the occupied territory was already sealed. The ceremony marked the official withdrawal of the German troops to the western half of Poland and the handover of the city and fortress of Brest-Litovsk to the Soviets.

The German-Soviet parade in the town of Brest-Litovsk

The Soviets erected 'Victory Arches', decorating them with stars and swastikas. German troops proceeded to march through these arches, and both sides acknowledged the other's achievements in battle

Polish as an inferior race that had no right to an independent nation, while the Soviets viewed the nation of Poland as the product of its elite, educated classes. Yet both ideologies resulted in the same outcome: the wholesale massacre of Polish nationals.

Schooled in efficient killing by the Great Terror of 1937-1938, which was the ruthless purging of Communist Party and government officials, along with the widespread oppression of the peasantry, the NKVD (Soviet secret police) began to remove the intellectual classes (officials, landowners, policemen and army officers). The purpose of this was to eradicate the "threat" of Polish nationalism. Polish Jews were deported en masse to the gulags (labour camps) in the frozen Siberian tundra, while executions became a regular occurrence, a prime example of which was the shooting of 21,892 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest and four other locations in April 1940.

Such was the eagerness of the invading forces to cooperate, the Germans and Soviets held a joint parade in Brest-Litovsk, and their troops often met one another in friendly encounters throughout Poland. On one occasion, the Germans even handed a conquered fortress over to their allies.

Winter war

As the bloodshed continued in this newly occupied territory, a new target emerged for Stalin: Finland. With the territorial and military concessions set out for the Baltic states in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact secured, the Soviets expected Finland to similarly acquiesce. But to Stalin's consternation, the small Scandinavian state remain resolute in its refusal to fold under pressure. When 'negotiations' with the Soviets eventually collapsed on 13th November 1939, the Finns knew they had little time to reinforce the 150-kilometre-long Mannerheim Line - their key line of defence - named after their Commander-in-Chief, Carl Mannerheim.

The Soviets based their hastily drawn up invasion plan on a 12-day operation, with the aim of concluding operations by 21st December, Stalin's 60th birthday. Considering that the Finns were massively outnumbered, possessed tsarist-era howitzers, lacked any tanks and only had enough artillery shells for a week of fighting, it's plain to see why the Soviets were so confident. But as is often the case in any war, this hubris ultimately proved to be unfounded.

When the Soviets crossed the border on 30th November, they encountered a ferocious resistance. The main thrust into Finland was conducted by the 7th Army along the Karelia Isthmus. It got off to a horrendous start as the Finns, careful to avoid fighting in the open, exploited the forest terrain to good effect. They also benefitted from having history's most lethal sniper in their ranks, Simo Hayha. In the space of 100 days (before a gunshot wound to the face forced his withdrawal) the man known as "the White Death" killed 542 Soviet troops.

The Finnish forces held on until 13th March 1940, despite the mammoth forces ranged against them. The signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty put an end to a campaign that cost the Soviets over 200,000 men. In return, Finland could count the loss of approximately 25,000 dead and territories including the Gulf of Finland Islands.

The shambolic performance of the Red Army had a profound effect on Germany. Unbeknownst to Stalin, it reinforced Hitler's opinion that the Soviet Union was a rotten house that would collapse the moment its front door was kicked in. As swathes of Europe fell to the unstoppable Wehrmacht in 1940, it seemed logical to expect a similar outcome in the Soviet states. Hitler's

The Soviet's different alliances

- **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed**
  23rd August 1939
  Following the collapse of talks with the British and French, the Soviet Union signs its infamous pact with Germany, laying the foundations for the division of Poland and the Baltics.
- **German invasion of Poland**
  1st September 1939
  The Germans cross the Polish border and begin their ruthless invasion, sweeping the stunned Polish military aside.
- **Battle of Khalkhin Gol**
  11th May - 15th September 1939
  Following years of skirmishes on the Manchurian border, the Red Army conclusively defeats the Japanese at Khalkhin Gol, putting an end to hostilities.
- **Soviet invasion of Poland**
  17th September 1939
  As outlined in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union invades Poland from the east, killing off hopes that Poland could hold out against invasion.
- **Poland surrenders**
  28th September 1939
  Despite putting up a valiant fight, the Polish military leadership realise the situation is doomed and finally agree to sign the official surrender papers.
- **The Winter War**
  30th November 1939
  With the east of Poland and the Baltic states now under its control, the Soviets expect Finland to agree to its terms. But they stand firm, resulting in a Soviet invasion and the Winter War.

- **Finland comes to terms**
  13th March 1940
  Unable to invade the whole of Finland, the Soviets finally convince the exhausted Finns to accept their terms and end hostilities. The Moscow Peace Treaty is signed.
- **Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact**
  13th April 1941
  In order to ensure that both sides remain neutral during World War II, the Soviets sign a non-aggression pact with their former enemies. This extinguishes the threat of a Japanese invasion from the east.

Berlin's fate was officially decided between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta in February 1945. Unofficially, Churchill had other ideas

eastern "Garden of Eden" appeared more attainable than ever before.

Incredibly, the paranoid mind of Stalin led him to discount numerous warnings of the impending disaster, including those compiled by Richard Sorge, a spy in Tokyo with strong connections to the German embassy. Even the Red Orchestra, a spy network gathering information in the heart of Berlin, couldn't convince Stalin, whose judgement could not have been further off the mark.

On the morning of 22nd June 1941, the Germans unleashed hell. Divided into three armies (North, Centre and South) a force of 3.8 million soldiers took the Soviets completely by surprise. Poorly distributed and warned only to shoot in self-defence, the Red Army ranks were paralysed by fear and confusion. General Heinz Guderian's motorised forces exploited the situation, carving up vast tracts of Soviet territory while mowing down the fleeing enemy troops. The genocidal war that Hitler had always wanted had begun.

In the face of this existential threat Stalin had little choice but to turn to the West for help. He quickly signed his empire up to the Allied Coalition alongside Britain and the US (not actively engaged at this point), as well as a host of other countries. For the rest of the war, the Big Three (Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin) would cooperate in the fight against Germany.

Supplies were shipped to the Soviet territories in Atlantic convoys, and included tanks, jeeps, weaponry and, most importantly, food. With vital agricultural terrain, including the 'breadbasket' of Ukraine, in German hands, the Soviet population once again faced the very real and harrowing prospect of starvation.

Joint military parades were also held in the Polish cities of Bialystok, Grodno and Lwow

"The Soviet population once again faced the very real and harrowing prospect of starvation"

Cooperation between the British and the Soviets would rise to a whole new level on 25th August 1941 with their joint invasion of Iran. The purpose of Operation Countenance was the seizure of Iranian oilfields and ensuring that Allied supply routes in the Persian Corridor were secure. The invasion was deemed necessary by the Allies as they believed the Iranian King Rezah Shah harboured sympathies for the Axis cause. By 17th September, the king had been deposed and both strategic objectives had been achieved.

Iran was also the location for the first meeting between the three main Allied leaders. Held at the Soviet embassy in the Iranian capital, the Tehran Conference (28th November to 1st December 1943) concluded with the western Allies agreeing to open a second front in the war against Germany, something that Stalin had long called for.

It seems incredible that the Soviet Union began WWII as a German ally, yet concluded it with the destruction of Berlin as part of the Allied powers, having seen vast swathes of its own land decimated by Hitler's forces. Both prior to and during the conflict, Stalin only ever acted in the interest of the Soviet Union, willingly siding with whomever he felt best served his cause. It is fair to say that his main concern was the extension of Soviet influence, and he had no qualms about inflicting terror upon other sovereign nations or even his own people at times, in order to ultimately achieve it.

Equally, when the snake with whom he'd signed a pact bit him, he instantly sought the help of former enemies in his efforts to kill it and ensure his own survival and that of the empire he ruled. Of all the key players in WWII, Stalin was the one who managed to manipulate the others most effectively, knowing the influence that he carried on the geopolitical stage.

- **Operation Barbarossa**
22 June 1941
The German invasion of the Soviet Union begins in a blaze of artillery and confusion as the Soviets are taken by surprise. Stalin had refused to believe that Hitler would launch such an attack on them.

- **Soviets join Allied Coalition**
June 1941
In the face of the Germans betrayal of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin endorses the Western Allies and signs the Soviet Union into the Allied Coalition ranged against the Axis he formerly allied with.

- **Allied supplies to Soviet Union**
1941 onwards
A major factor in the Soviets' ability to keep fighting and feed their people was the aid provided by the west. Under the terms of the Lend-Lease, the US supplied the Soviets, with food, weaponry, vehicles, metals and fuel.

- **Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran**
25th August - 17th September 1941
Codenamed Operation Countenance, the British and the Soviets work together to conquer Iran in order to secure the oilfields for the Soviets and secure the Persian Corridor.

- **Battle for Moscow**
October 1941
Following their crushing defeat in the Vyazma-Bryansk battles, the Soviets are pushed further back towards their capital as the Germans attempt to end the war with a final push on Moscow.

- **Operation Uranus**
19th November 1942
As the fighting rages in and around the city of Stalingrad, the Soviets begin a major offensive against their former allies. The operation ends with the complete encirclement and destruction of the German 6th Army.

- **Tehran Conference**
28th November - 2nd December 1943
Held in the Soviet embassy in Tehran, the leaders of the 'Big Three' meet for the first time. Stalin implores Roosevelt and Churchill to open a second front against the Germans, a request that they agree to.

SPIES THAT WON WWII

These are the spies, secret agents, codebreakers and saboteurs – Britain's secret army who fought in the shadows in a bid to cripple Nazi Germany

Following the disaster that unfolded during the Battle of France, Britain found itself standing alone in the world; the only major power standing between Hitler and the conquest of Western Europe. With his army shattered and the threat of invasion a near certainty, Churchill needed a plan to take control of the dire situation. So he turned to his secret services, and the newly formed Special Operations Executive, to carry the war back to Hitler. A unique group of secret agents, overseas guerrilla fighters, code-breaking boffins and specially trained saboteurs would work tirelessly to turn the tide of conflict in the Allies' favour.

Here we choose 20 of the most notable agents and reveal their stories. Most worked to bring down tyranny. Some chose to support it. Many sacrificed their lives. Whatever their role, their exploits stand as some of most intriguing tales from World War II…

> "MOST WORKED TO BRING DOWN TYRANNY. SOME CHOSE TO SUPPORT IT. MANY SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES"

KEY TRAIT

MASTERMIND	ASSASSIN
SABOTEUR	CODEBREAKER
DOUBLE AGENT	SMOOTH TALKER

IAN FLEMMING

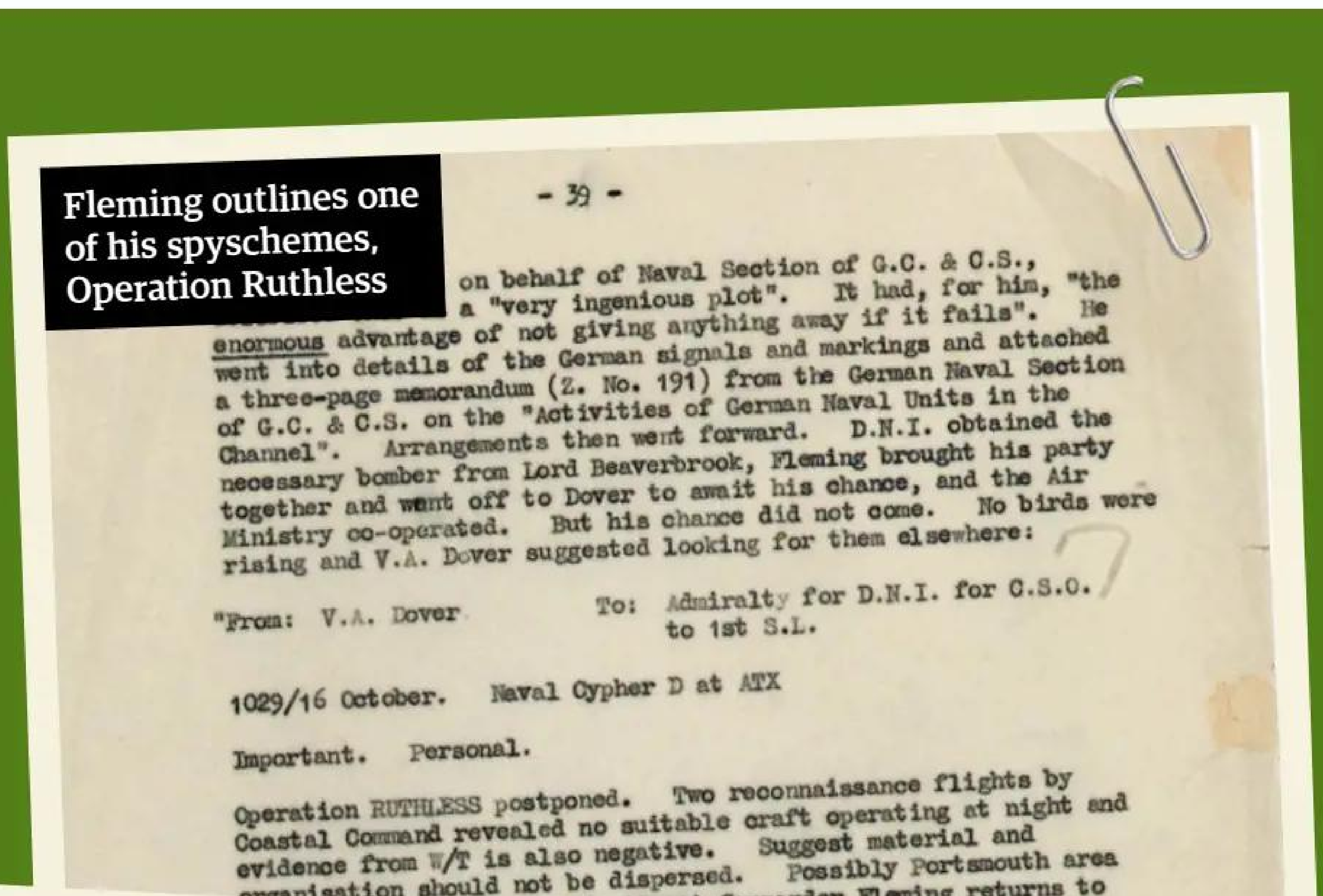
The James Bond creator enjoyed a distinguished career in military intelligence

As a journalist, Ian Fleming journeyed to Russia in 1939 to report on a trade deal, although his real mission was to ascertain Russia's military strength and morale ahead of what looked like certain war. When Britain did finally enter the conflict, Fleming was appointed as assistant to Rear-Admiral John Godfrey, the director of Naval Intelligence, and took up the position of lieutenant in the Special Branch of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, a rank he was later to bestow on his famous literary creation, James Bond.

Fleming helped develop ties between the UK and US over the running of secret agents and was heavily involved in the formation of the 30 Assault Unit, a British commando group designed to support troops and glean vital information for the war effort. Among their greatest achievements were the capture of an Enigma machine – the key piece of German encryption equipment – and the seizure of the complete records of the German navy.

He is also widely credited as the author of the Trout Memo, which culminated in Operation Mincemeat, a deception to disguise the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily. Mincemeat saw the body of a dead tramp dressed as a British officer, supplied with false papers, and dumped off the coast of Spain. It was washed up and intercepted by German agents.

Fleming's knowledge of secret operations found voice in the creation of the most famous fictional spy of all time, James Bond, who he cast as the hero of his 1953 novel *Casino Royale*. Fleming wrote a further 13 Bond books. The hero's name was taken from an ornithologist, though the likes of M and Q branch were drawn from his experiences in British intelligence. It is thought that the character of M was based on Fleming's boss, Rear-Admiral Godfrey.



- 39 -

on behalf of Naval Section of G.C. & C.S.,
a "very ingenious plot". It had, for him, "the
enormous advantage of not giving anything away if it fails". He
went into details of the German signals and markings and attached
a three-page memorandum (Z. No. 191) from the German Naval Section
of G.C. & C.S. on the "Activities of German Naval Units in the
Channel". Arrangements then went forward. D.N.I. obtained the
necessary bomber from Lord Beaverbrook, Fleming brought his party
together and went off to Dover to await his chance, and the Air
Ministry co-operated. But his chance did not come. No birds were
rising and V.A. Dover suggested looking for them elsewhere:

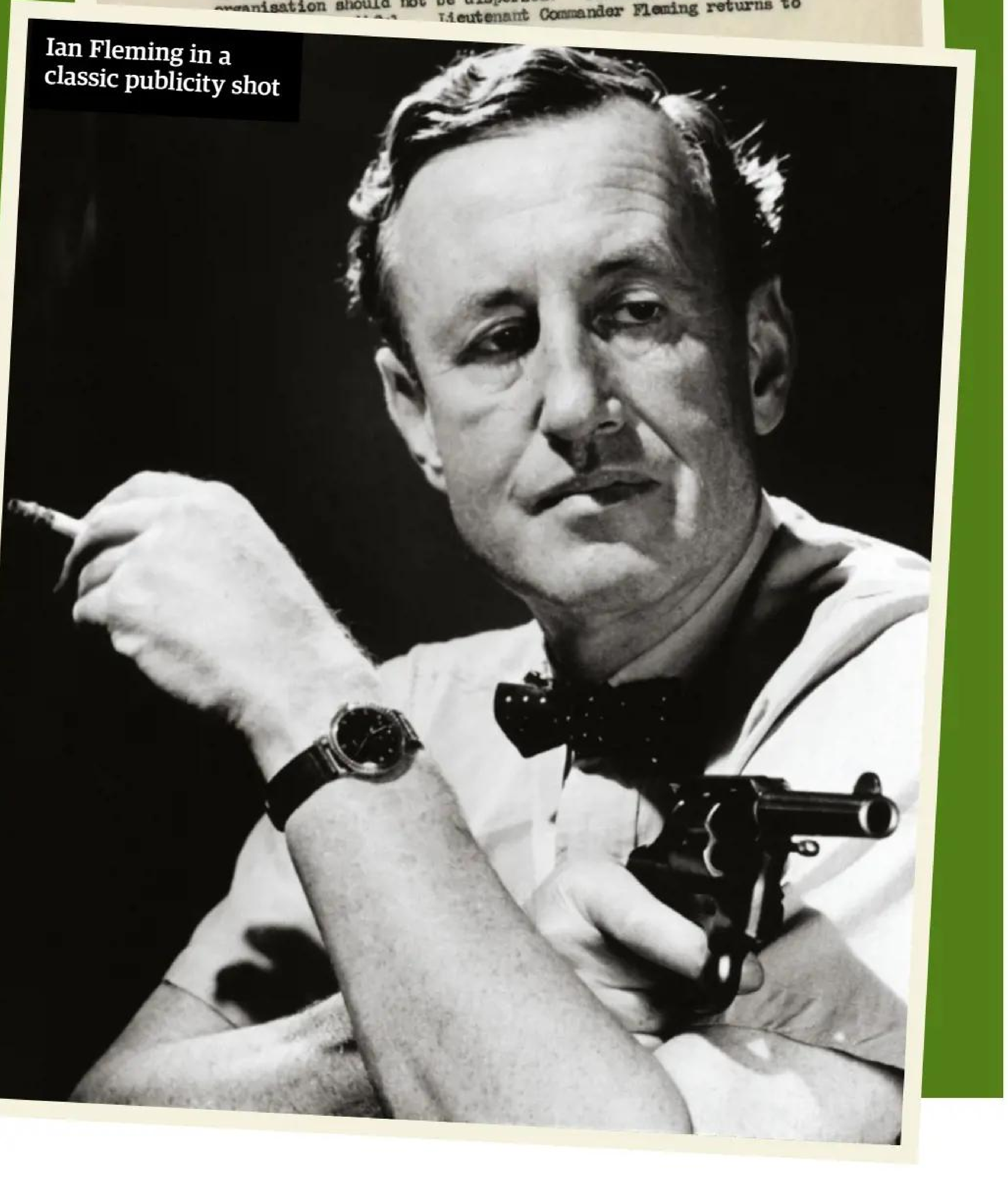
"From: V.A. Dover To: Admiralty for D.N.I. for C.S.O.
to 1st S.L.

1029/16 October. Naval Cypher D at ATX

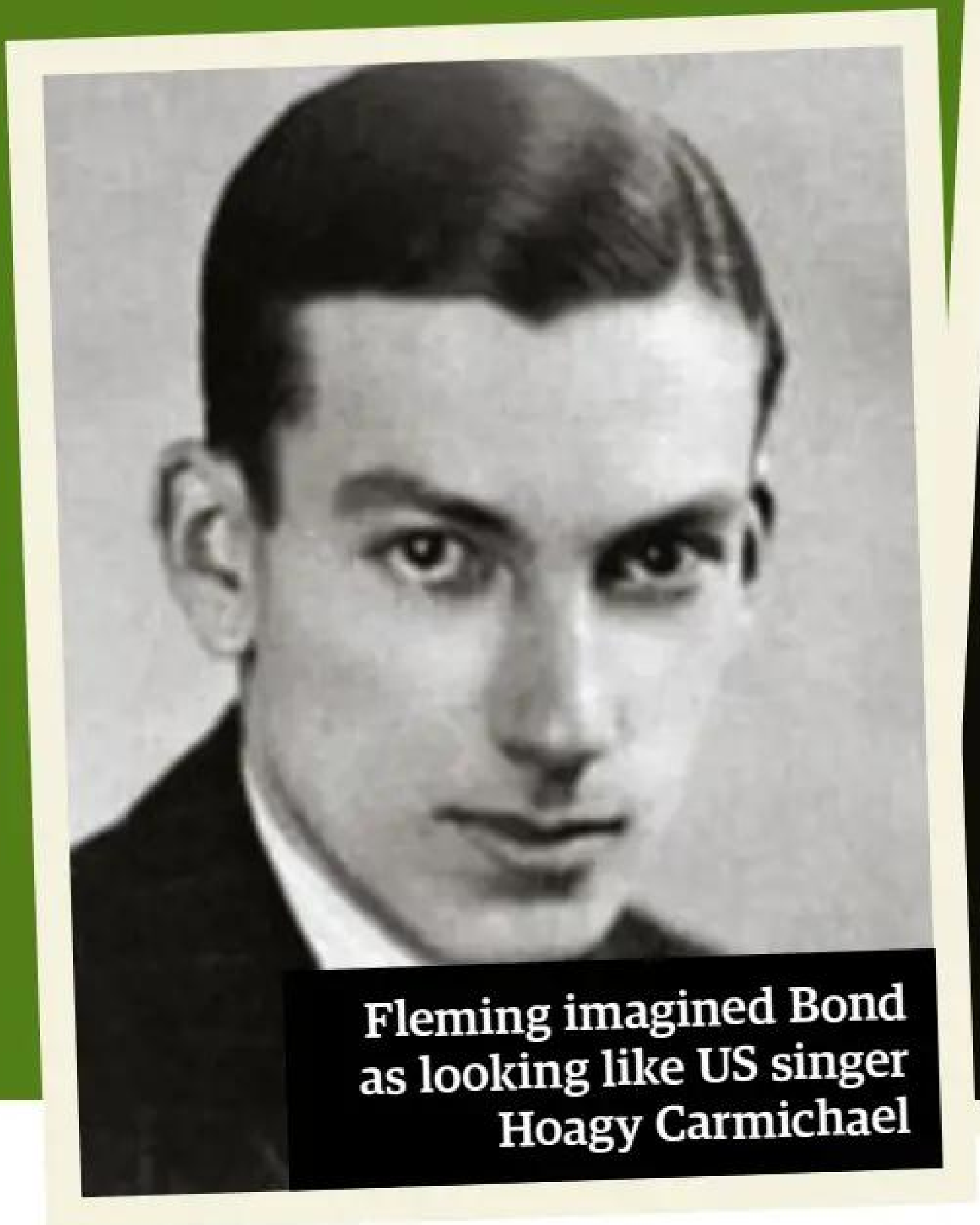
Important. Personal.

Operation RUTHLESS postponed. Two reconnaissance flights by
Coastal Command revealed no suitable craft operating at night and
evidence from W/T is also negative. Suggest material and
organisation should not be dispersed. Possibly Portsmouth area
Lieutenant Commander Fleming returns to

Fleming outlines one of his spyschemes, Operation Ruthless



Ian Fleming in a classic publicity shot



Fleming imagined Bond as looking like US singer Hoagy Carmichael

ROGER LANDES

The betrayed agent who got his revenge

After working with Claude de Baissac, Roger Landes took over the Scientist network, though was forced to escape into Spain when betrayed by French Resistance leader André Grandclement. In the UK he was suspected of being a turncoat, though was found innocent and returned to France to help rebuild the network ahead of the D-Day operations. Once on the ground the Resistance leaders dispatched Grandclement and Landes was lumbered with the unenviable job of killing Grandclement's wife.

'TOMMY' YEO-THOMAS

The super-spy who inspired James Bond

Yeo-Thomas, who was code-named White Rabbit by the Gestapo, was parachuted into France three times before eventually being captured and tortured. He was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp but managed to escape. Once, while on a train in France, he engaged in conversation with Klaus Barbie, the notorious Nazi known as the 'Butcher of Lyon'. Like Bond, he is said to have employed a number of techniques to escape his enemies – including jumping from a train, strangling a guard, wearing disguises and riding in a hearse – and is also said to have been a hit with women. He went on to win the George Cross.

LEO MARKS

The SEO's chief cryptographer

Conscripted in January 1942, Marks trained as a cryptographer and went on to join the SOE (Special Operations Executive), rather than joining colleagues at Bletchley Park. He briefed a clutch of SOE agents sent into occupied Europe, including Noor Inayat-Khan as well as the Grouse/Swallow team of saboteurs sent to destroy Hitler's heavy water facility in Norway.

Marks recognised that there were some serious defects in the existing cipher system and so set about working with agents on memorising unpublished and memorable poems. He was also credited with reinventing the one-time pad, whereby agent and home office held the only two copies of pads of random letters used to communicate, which the agent destroyed after its initial use.

FRANCIS SUTTILL

The network mastermind betrayed at the last minute

Francis Suttill was chosen to establish and run the Prosper network based in Paris and his list of successful missions included the sabotage of the Chaingy power station, the destruction of 1,000 litres of petrol and a clutch of attacks on goods trains running the Orleans-Paris line. He also founded a safe house at the School of National Agriculture at Grignon, which has been cited as one of the most important SOE houses in France. The collapse of the Prosper network was a tragedy in which hundreds of SOE agents and Resistance fighters were swiftly betrayed and captured.

JOZEF GABČÍK & JAN KUBIŠ

The Czech soldiers who gave their life in Operation Anthropoid

These two soldiers in the Czechoslovak army-in-exile worked under SOE instruction in Operation Anthropoid, which led to the assassination of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich in Prague during May 1942. The mission was the only successful assassination of a senior Nazi officer during World War II, although it proved a pyrrhic victory, prompting terrible SS reprisals conducted against civilians in the region.

Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš were among a number of troops parachuted into Czechoslovakia. They met with anti-Nazi sympathisers and, after planning and aborting a number of assassination missions, settled on an ambush of Heydrich's car. On the morning of 27 May, as Heydrich approached, Gabčík stepped in front of the car and opened fire with his British-issued Sten sub-machine gun, which jammed, allowing Heydrich to return fire with his pistol. Kubiš then launched an explosive at the car, fragments of which ripped through the bumper, embedding shrapnel in Heydrich's left-hand side. The gunfight continued before Gabčík and Kubiš made their escape.

The assassins presumed their attack had failed. Heydrich, however, succumbed to his wounds and died on 4th June. Hitler was absolutely furious at what had happened, and ordered immediate reprisals, which included the Lidice Massacre where a whole village was destroyed. Despite their brutal retaliation, the Nazis were unable to find the perpetrators until resistance fighter Karel Čurda turned himself in to the Gestapo and betrayed the team's local contacts. Following a vicious manhunt characterised by brutal Gestapo interrogation techniques, Kubiš, Gabčík and the other parachutists were eventually besieged in the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague. Here they died, either during the ferocious gunfight or via suicide as the Nazis closed in.

Jan Kubiš, whose explosive went on to kill Heydrich

Heydrich's Mercedes after the attack

AGENCY WORK

Discover the dizzying array of British intelligence organisations

MI9: Responsible for the interrogation of enemy prisoners of war until 1941, MI9 also assisted in the escape and evasion of Allied prisoners and the debriefing of those who successfully reached England. Further, MI9 communicated with prisoners who were still in captivity, sending them instructions and equipment through clandestine sources.

MI6: Also known as the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), MI6 serves to this day as the primary foreign intelligence agency of the British government. During World War II, MI6 established covert operations offices in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, conducting successful operations in all theatres of the conflict.

MI8: Serving as the signals intelligence section of the War Office, it was the responsibility of MI8 to establish and manage a worldwide network of radio transmission posts referred to as the 'Y Stations'. MI8 was responsible for communications security and for the Radio Security Service (RSS) for 18 months during 1939-1941, prior to the absorption of the RSS by MI6.

MI7: The genesis of British press and propaganda management occurred with MI7. At the outbreak of World War II, the section was reconstituted with primarily civilian personnel working as censors and propagandists. In the spring of 1940, most of the functions of MI7 were transferred to the British Ministry of Information.

MI5: Also called the Security Service, MI5 served as the domestic counterintelligence and security section of British Intelligence. During World War II, MI5, which remains active today, developed and administered the XX (Double-Cross) double agent programme and controlled the entry of foreign nationals to Britain through the London Reception Centre at the Royal Patriotic School.

MI10: Responsible for the analysis of various types of technical intelligence across the globe during World War II, MI10 regularly conducted evaluations of captured enemy weapons and a wide range of emerging technology as it was brought to Britain from the field. MI10 was eventually merged into the Government Communications Headquarters.

The modern MI6 Building in London; an iconic landmark in the spy world

NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION: Also known as Room 39, the Naval Intelligence Division (NID) was created in 1912. During World War II, NID handled naval Ultra transmission decrypts and fielded information-gathering operatives with its Commando 30 Assault Unit. NID officers were active in British warzones across the world and were present at Operations Torch and Overlord.

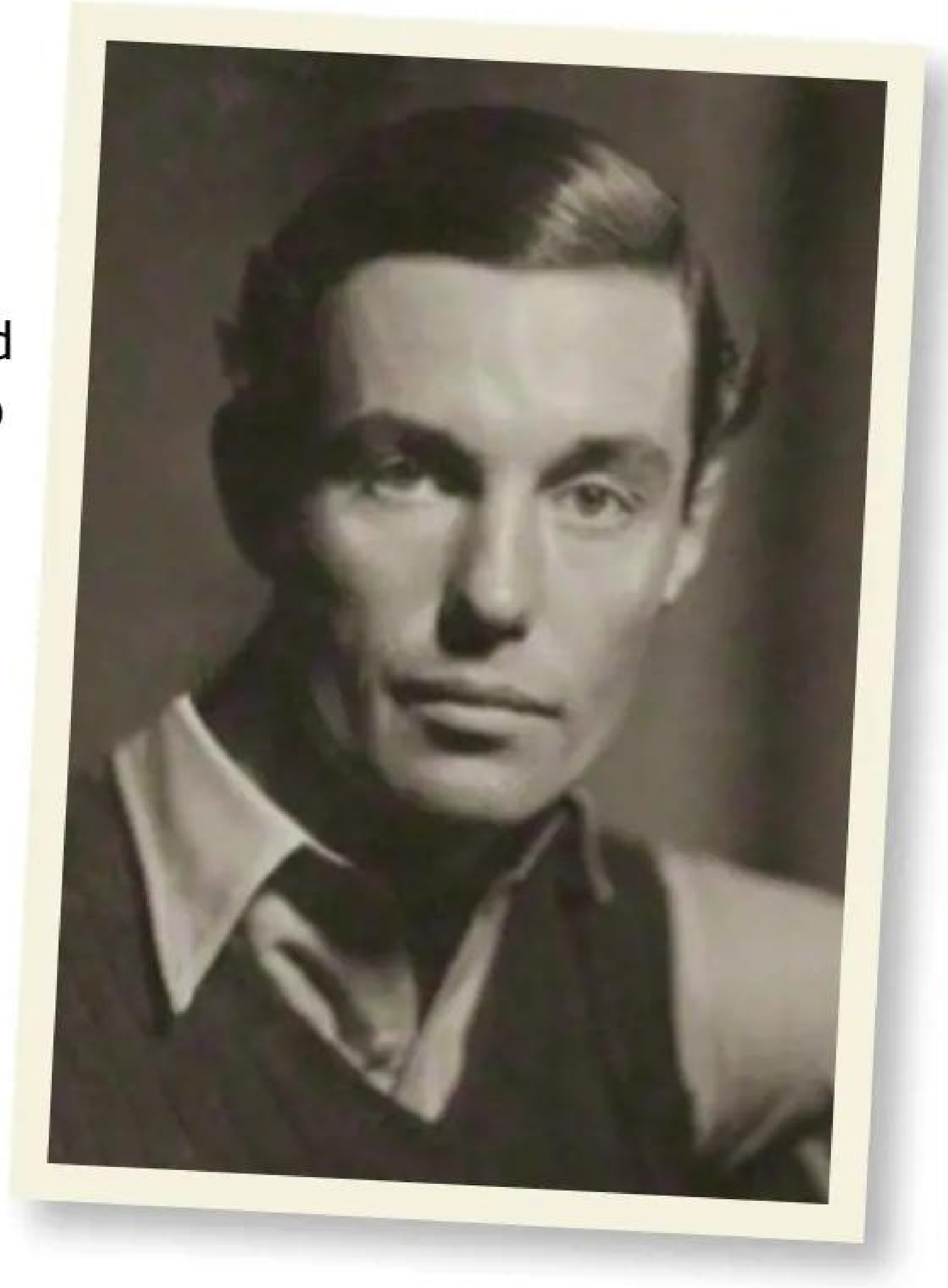
PETER FLEMING

The dashing writer and adventurer was a prime mover during the secret war in the East

The elder brother of Ian, the effortlessly glamorous Peter Fleming became a prominent figure in British intelligence, working with Colin Gubbins on the formation of the Auxiliary Units, who would fight a resistance war in the UK should the Germans complete a successful invasion. When Gubbins left to form the SOE, he took Fleming with him.

In April 1941, armed with a ton of explosives, £40,000 in notes and gold sovereigns and Italian pocket dictionaries, Fleming and a team of agents entered Northern Greece. They held a key valley in Macedonia, the Monastir Gap, against the might of the German army, before withdrawing and playing havoc with enemy communications, blowing up bridges and railways as they went. Fleming and his men also helped evacuate the British Vice Consul and diplomatic staff to Cairo.

His abilities saw him transferred to India and then Ceylon to head up D Division in charge of military deception operations in Southeast Asia. He played a prominent role in the British invasion of Burma – a territory that had been lost during the Japanese invasion of 1942 – planting information that claimed British forces in the region were much larger than they really were. In June 1945 his efforts were rewarded with an OBE.



NOOR INAYAT KHAN

A courageous spy princess whose life ended in tragedy

Descended from Tipu Sultan, an 18th-century ruler of Mysore, Inayat Khan joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force — taking the name Nora Baker — before entering the SOE in February 1943. Despite reservations about her suitability for a secret agency role, she became the first female wireless operator sent to France and survived the collapse of the Prosper network.

Though ordered to leave by Colonel Maurice Buckmaster, head of SOE's French operations, she bravely stayed on and, with all the Prospect leaders in captivity, became the single most important SOE asset in the entire region as she continued to transmit information back to England. Unfortunately, in October 1943 the Gestapo captured her after she was betrayed by a double agent. She twice escaped her captors only to be retaken immediately, and when she was transferred to a prison at Pforzheim she is said to have been perpetually chained in a crouching position.

She was moved to the death camp at Dachau and executed in July 1944. An unnamed guard gave a description of the death of a woman who is thought to be Inayat Khan, and its content is extremely upsetting. She was awarded the George Cross in 1949.

ALAN TURING

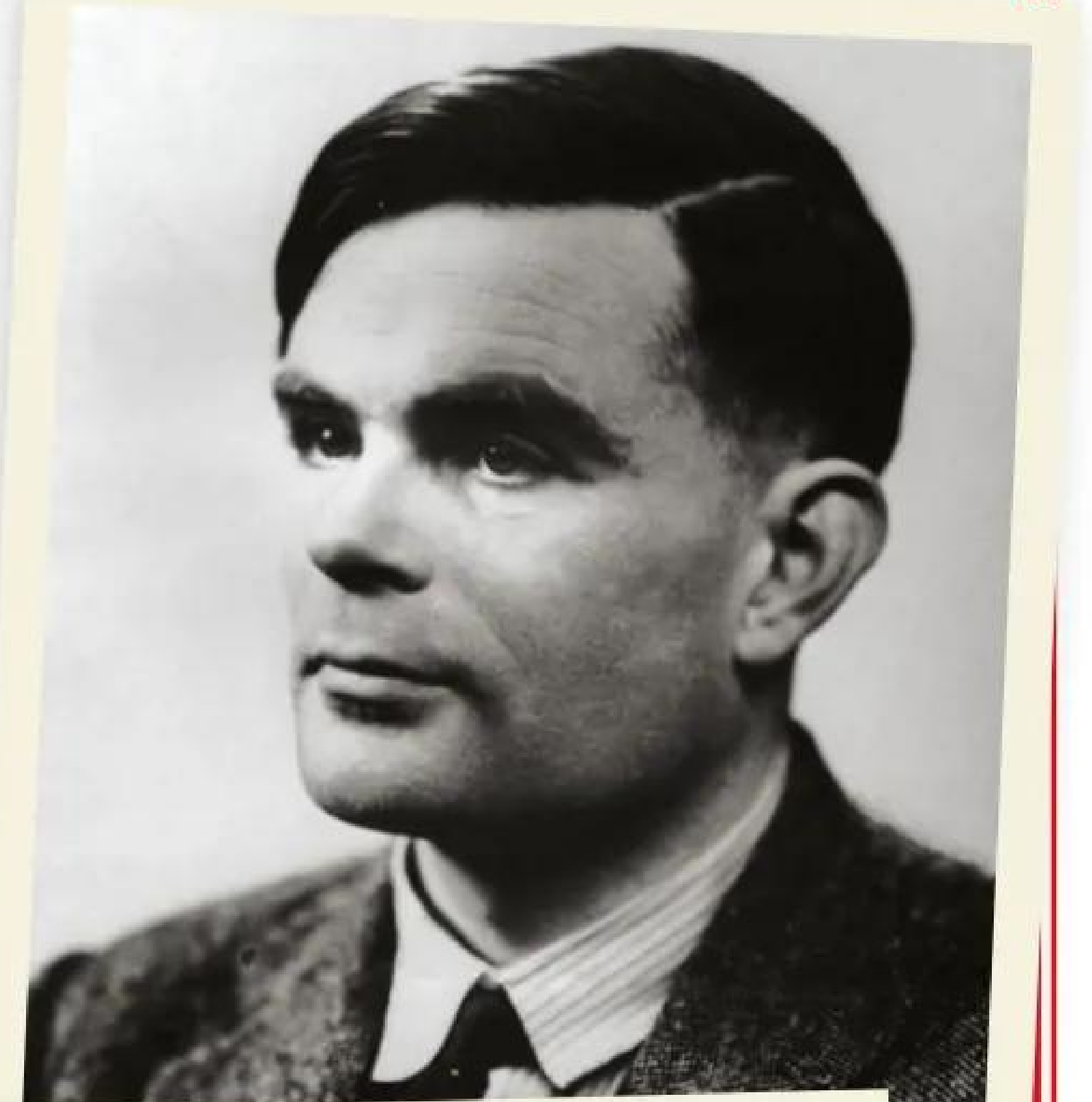
The mathematical genius who helped crack the Enigma code

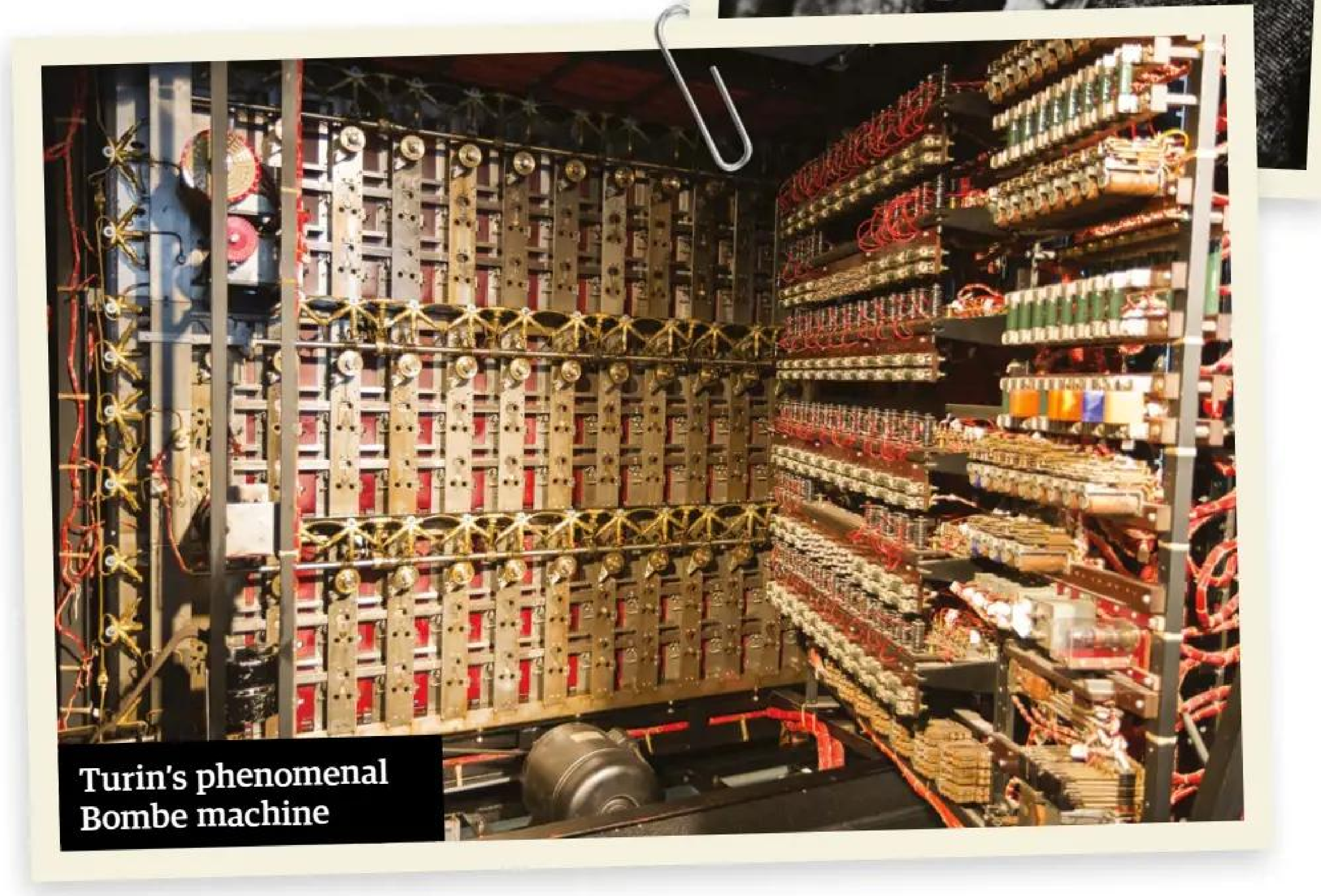
Alan Turing was a brilliant mathematician born in London. He studied at both Cambridge and Princeton universities before going on to work for the British Code and Cypher School even before WWII. Once war was declared, Turing took up a full-time role at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire where he worked diligently to decipher the military codes used by Germany and its allies, his primary efforts aimed at cracking the Enigma code.

The Enigma was the German armed forces' enciphering machine used to send messages securely. Polish mathematicians had cracked the original codes but the Germans increased Enigma security by changing the cipher system on a daily basis. Along with fellow code-breaker Gordon Welchman, Turing developed a machine known as the Bombe, which replicated the action of several Enigma machines wired together and significantly reduced the work of the code-breakers. From mid-1940, the team at Bletchley Park was regularly reading German Air Force signals.

It was a different matter in the Battle of the Atlantic, however, a crucial theatre of conflict. Here, given the German Navy's greater cipher discipline, messages relayed back and forth between the Kriegsmarine and German U-boats had flummoxed the code-breakers at Bletchley. The Allies struck gold, however, with the capture of U-110, which provided them with an intact naval Enigma machine. This was soon dispatched to Turing and the other boffins at Bletchley who got to work. Their efforts were further boosted by the fact that the German high command believed the codes used in the naval communication were inviolable, and soon the Allied convoys were perpetually dodging the U-boat wolfpacks.

The Germans' inclusion of a fourth rotor in the Enigma was a setback, and the U-boats once again enjoyed a 'happy time' during 1942 when they terrorised the Atlantic convoys. Turing, however, eventually cracked this problem, too. The battle to break German ciphers was perennial and Turing proved a key asset for the Allies. His work was memorialised in the 2014 film *The Imitation Game*.





Turin's phenomenal Bombe machine

TOR GLAD

Norwegian worked as a double agent in tandem with John Moe

Tor Glad, a Norwegian citizen, came ashore in Scotland with John Moe and turned double agent under the MI5 XX programme. Glad participated in staged sabotage operations and transmitted false radio broadcasts that convinced the Germans that the Allies planned to invade Norway prior to the actual invasion of North Africa in 1942. The Germans were compelled to station more than 300,000 troops in Norway to defend against an invasion that never came. Moe and Glad were nicknamed Mutt and Jeff for their resemblance to popular cartoon characters of the period. British handlers came to doubt Glad's continuing value and eventually interned him in 1943.

ROMAN CZERNIAWSKI

Polish double agent fed false D-Day information to the Germans

Once associated with French double agent Mathilde Carré in the failed Interallie Resistance network, Czerniawski escaped to Britain and was heavily scrutinised by Polish Intelligence. Both MI6 and MI5 questioned him, and the British turned him under the MI5 XX programme. With the code name 'Brutus', Czerniawski passed false information to the Germans; however, his strong anti-Soviet sentiment concerned the British that German authorities had become suspicious. But by the end of 1943, the British deemed Czerniawski safely operational. He then transmitted false information prior to D-Day under Operation Fortitude, helping convince the Germans that the invasion of Europe would take place in the Pas-de-Calais.

JUAN PUJOL GARCÍA

Catalan double agent played a pivotal role in D-Day deceptions

Juan Pujol García, code-named Garbo, offered his services to German intelligence before joining the British and working with MI6 as a double agent. Together with Tommy Harris, he created a network of 27 imaginary sub-agents through whom he provided misinformation to the Germans during Operation Fortitude, which aimed to disguise the location of the D-Day landings. In one key transmission, Pujol deceived the Germans so completely that they kept two armoured divisions and 19 infantry divisions in the Pas-de-Calais in anticipation of an invasion. This gave the Allies time to establish their bridgehead. He was awarded both the Iron Cross and an MBE.

CLAUDE DE BAISSAC

A key player in France's Scientist network

Mauritian Claude de Baissac, the brother of fellow SOE operative Lise de Baissac, parachuted into France on 30th July 1942 with Harry Peulevé and helped form the Scientist network in the Bordeaux area. Among their operations they attacked the local U-boat pens. During the assault phase of Operation Overlord in early June 1944, the head of SOE operations in France sent De Baissac back to the Normandy region to re-found Scientist and he worked on the army's flanks providing tactical intelligence. His bravado is recorded in one episode where he received an SAS captain on the upper storey of a house that had a German HQ on the ground floor.

NANCY GRACE AUGUSTA WAKE

Her life in jeopardy, the Nazis' most wanted agent survived the war

The most decorated female in Allied service during World War II, Nancy Wake was continually in danger in Nazi-occupied France. Undeterred, she risked her life initially as a courier for the French Resistance. She remained elusive, the Gestapo deeming her its most wanted enemy spy, nicknaming her the 'White Mouse', and placing a bounty of 5 million francs on her head.

Wake's determination to thwart the Nazis grew from first-hand experience. Born in New Zealand, she moved with her family to Australia, ran away from home at 16, and made her way to New York City and London. She worked briefly as a nurse while learning the craft of journalism. During the 1930s she took a job as a European correspondent with Hearst Newspapers, witnessing the brutality of the Nazi rise to power.

With the outbreak of World War II, Nancy joined the French Resistance. When the network she served was compromised, she was arrested but released when the Germans believed a friend's concocted story of the supposed infidelity of her husband, Henri Fiocca. After several attempts, she reached London and volunteered for the SOE. Fiocca chose to remain in France. He fell into the hands of the Gestapo and was tortured to death without revealing Nancy's whereabouts.

On the night of 29th April 1944, Wake parachuted into France and joined the band of Maquis fighters led by Captain Henri Tardivat in the Troncais Forest. She trained Maquis recruits and once rode a bicycle more than 500 kilometres to deliver a top-secret codebook. During one raid she silenced a German sentry, delivering a fatal judo chop with her bare hands.

Wake survived the war, receiving the George Medal, The US Medal of Freedom, the French Croix de Guerre, and other decorations for valour. She died in London in 2011 at age 98.

Nancy was given many awards

Nancy was determined to have a role in the war

> "SHE ONCE RODE A BICYCLE MORE THAN 500KM TO DELIVER A NOTEBOOK"

MERLIN MINSHALL.

Serving with Ian Fleming in Naval Intelligence brought new adventure

Merlin Minshall was an adventurer. After graduating from London University, he set out in 1931 to become the first Englishman to sail across Europe to the Black Sea. An avid auto racer, he won the Italian Foreign Challenge in 1937 where Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini presented the trophy. Minshall later became first to drive an auto with an air-cooled engine across the Sahara.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Minshall reported for duty with the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve where he served under Ian Fleming for a time. In 1940, he participated in a failed plan to block the Danube River with barges to impede the flow of oil to Germany and led Operation Shamrock, a joint Naval Intelligence-SOE mission monitoring German U-boat traffic along coastal France. In 1941, he assisted the hunt for the German battleship Bismarck while commanding a section at HMS Flowerdown, a Sussex wireless station, and served in the Pacific.

Minshall initially denied that Fleming had modelled James Bond after him but later went on to embrace the idea. Married four times, Minshall died aged 80 in 1987.

JOHN MOE

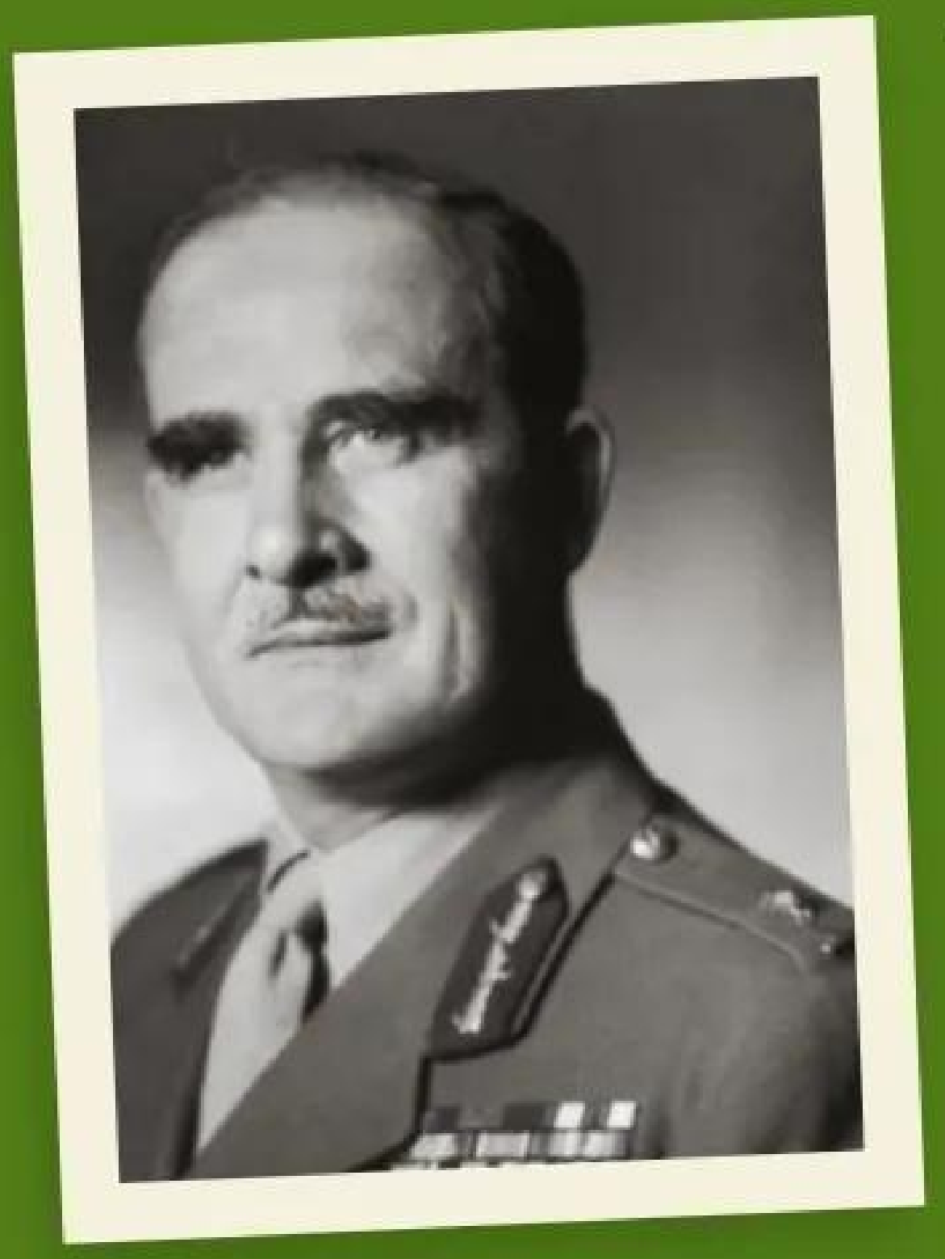
Dual citizen of Britain and Norway fed false information to the Nazis

Along with his companion Tor Glad, John Moe landed at Crovie on Scotland's Moray Firth, on 7th April 1941. The duo had been recruited by the German Abwehr to operate in Britain and commit acts of sabotage; however, they immediately approached local authorities and were interrogated by MI5 and MI6. Both were turned under the MI5 XX programme as double agents, committing staged acts of sabotage against worthless targets with explosives supplied by the Germans. Nicknamed Mutt and Jeff, they fed false information to the Abwehr through the radio before the Allied invasion of North Africa, prompting Germany to keep thousands of troops in Scandinavia.

Double agents Moe and Glad helped to divert thousands of Nazis away from the fight

COLIN GUBBINS

The disciplined and dapper Scotsman who headed up the Special Operations Executive



The prime mover in the Special Operations Executive (SOE), this energetic Scotsman served with distinction in the Royal Artillery during WWI before going on to fight in Russia for the White Army and then to Ireland, where he fought in the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21. His experiences in these two arenas gave him a keen insight into guerrilla warfare and he went on to author a number of training manuals, such as 1939's *Partisan Leader's Handbook*, which outlined the principles of sabotage and guerrilla warfare, for British Military Intelligence.

He worked on establishing the Auxiliary Units, who would fight a resistance war in the UK should the Germans complete a successful invasion, before he was invited to oversee the SOE. He took the codename M (a moniker borrowed by Fleming when he wrote his James Bond novels). Under his guidance, SOE formed separate sections to co-ordinate activities in specific countries, with the greatest concentration focusing on France. The SOE enjoyed many successes and endured many failures, including a disastrous campaign in the Netherlands that cost many agents' lives.

As the head of SOE, Gubbins co-ordinated the activities of resistance movements across the globe and Gubbins consulted with the Foreign Office, the chiefs of staff, representatives of the resistance organisations, governments-in-exile, and other agencies including his counterparts in the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

HENRI DÉRICOURT

The inscrutable Frenchman's history remains a mystery to this day

After escaping to Britain in August 1942, Frenchman Henri Déricourt joined the SOE and was parachuted back into his native land in January of the following year. He worked mainly for the Prosper network and arranged the transportation of over 60 SOE agents including Noor Inayat Khan, Vera Leigh, Yolande Beekman, Eliane Plewman, Diana Rowden, Jack Agazarian, Francis Suttill, Pearl Witherington and Lise de Baissac.

When the Prosper network was compromised, the likes of Agazarian and Suttill believed Déricourt might have been working against them as a double agent. In the aftermath of WWII, evidence emerged that Déricourt was guilty of providing information to the Gestapo that led to the arrest and execution of several agents including Inayat Khan, Agazarian and Suttill, among others. When interviewed for the book *Double Agent*, Déricourt claimed that the SEO had used him as a triple agent. Aware that the Gestapo had compromised the Prosper network, he said, the SEO deliberately sacrificed key agents in a bid to divert Nazi attention from Operation Overlord and the D-Day landings in Normandy in Operation Neptune.

Déricourt claims agents were sacrificed to protect D-Day

Déricourt was reportedly killed in an air crash over Laos in November 1962. His body was never found, however, and suggestions abound that his death was faked so that he might live a new life under an assumed name.

EDDIE MYERS

Engineer who sabotaged the Gorgopotamos viaduct

Lieutenant-Colonel Eddie Myers was the commanding officer on Operation Harling, an SOE mission held in conjunction with Greek Resistance groups, which aimed to destroy the viaduct and thereby hamper Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's supply route to north Africa. The sabotage was a success and proved that guerrillas working in conjunction with Allied officers could achieve spectacular results in occupied Europe. Myers remained on the ground, building his own guerrilla network, whose further successes included the destruction of the Asopos viaduct.

JACK AGAZARIAN

The selfless spy who made the ultimate sacrifice

RAF officer Jack Agazarian more than proved his mettle when he decided to return to France for a second mission in July 1943, even though the Gestapo knew who he was from his time with the Physician network. His bravery was further amplified when he stood in for his commanding officer, Nicholas Bodington, at a meeting that they felt might end up being a trap. It was, and Agazarian was arrested and subsequently killed. His wife also worked for SOE's F Section.

VIOLETTE SZABO

The brave agent who avenged her husband

Born Violette Bushell, Szabo joined the SOE in July 1943 following the death of her husband, Etienne Szabo, at the great tank battle of El Alamein. Her first mission, which she completed, was to check whether one of the Prosper network sub-chains had been compromised. She was then parachuted back into France in early June 1944, just two days after D-Day with the intention of disrupting German communications.

Shortly after landing, when in the company of French Resistance fighter Jacques Dufour and Jean Bariaud, her car ran into a German roadblock and she and Dufour laid down covering fire while the unarmed Bariaud escaped. Szabo and Dufour retreated towards a wood, exchanging fire with pursuing enemy troops. Szabo had an ankle injury and in the chase it gave way, forcing her to a standstill. She continued the firefight in a bid to let Dufour get away. She was captured and taken to the Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women. She was executed in February 1945.

Her bravery saw her become the second woman to win the George Cross, her citation stating that while she was brutally tortured, she never surrendered any significant information. Her exploits are remembered in the book and the 1958 film, *Carve Her Name With Pride*.

MARIAN REJEWSKI

The Polish mathematician who reconstructed the Enigma cipher machine

Significant early success in solving the cryptologic riddle of the German Enigma cipher machine was accomplished by a trio of Polish mathematicians in the 1930s. Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski, and Jerzy Różycki collaborated in the effort, and Rejewski actually made an Enigma machine in 1932 without previously having seen one.

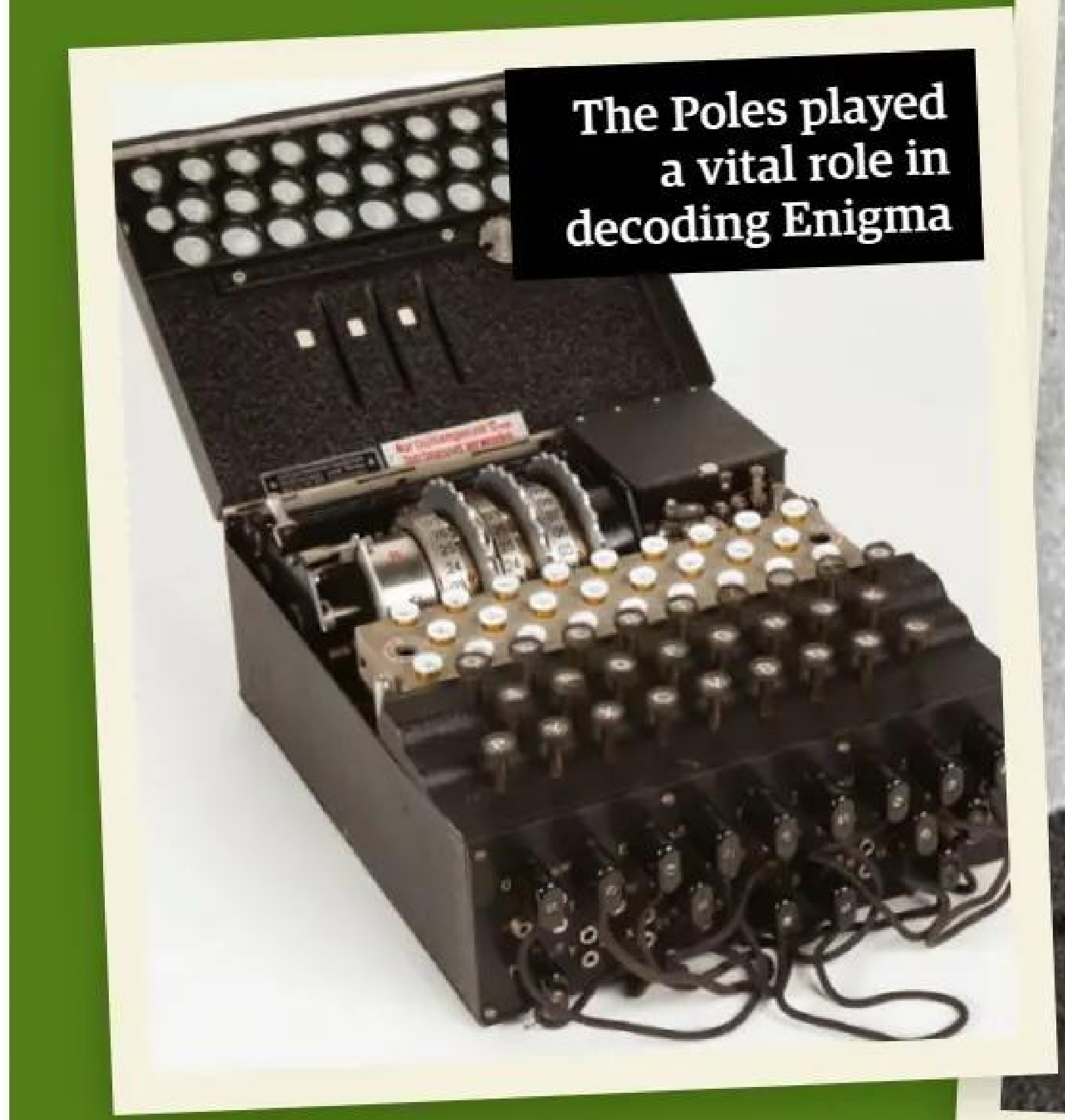
Rejewski was born in 1905 in Bromberg, at that time part of the German Empire. He attended Poznan University during the 1920s, and while Polish cryptanalysts had worked on Enigma for a time, their success had been limited. In the autumn of 1932, the task was handed to Rejewski.

Rejewski had only a general understanding of how the machine's system of rotors functioned and received some assistance from French sources. Within just a matter of days, he managed to untangle the labyrinth of internal wiring that made the Enigma a revolutionary encoding machine with millions of possible letter combinations. The Poles subsequently went on to pioneer invaluable techniques for cracking Enigma decryptions.

Weeks before the German invasion of Poland that started World War II, the Polish mathematicians met at Pyry, south of Warsaw, with British and French intelligence officers, revealing their successes. For British Intelligence, the progress of the Poles offered a great leap forward, allowing them to begin reading decrypted Enigma messages, dubbed Ultra, within months.

The Poles continued working in France until late 1942. Rejewski and Zygalski escaped to England the following summer and were enlisted in the Polish Army, cracking other German codes.

Meanwhile, British and American cryptanalysts had taken the lead in the decryption of Enigma transmissions. The Poles, who had provided vital assistance, were excluded from further participation. Their role remained obscure for some time. Rejewski died in 1980, aged 78. Twenty years later, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, Poland's highest civilian decoration.



The Poles played a vital role in decoding Enigma

"REJEWSKI MADE AN ENIGMA MACHINE"

SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

A step-by-step guide to the training of Special Operations Executive hopefuls

1. INTRODUCTORY COURSE

Those thought suitable for a role in the SOE were sent first on a two-three-week course, where they would engage in physical fitness exercises, basic map reading and weapons work, though the recruits were not told that they were testing for the SOE. There was also said to be a bar to see how potential agents might behave when alcohol was liberally poured.

2. GROUP A TRAINING

Those that passed the initial course were sent for a three-four-week course in paramilitary techniques in Scotland, most famously at Arisaig. They learned about small arms, and took lessons in unarmed combat (developed by former Shanghai police officers Sykes and Fairbairn), sabotage and demolition, intensive map reading and basic infantry tactical training.

3. GROUP B TRAINING

It was likely that the first two courses might wheedle out around 60 per cent of candidates, the remainder passing on to Group B training in the country houses around Beaulieu and the New Forest. Here they learned defensive lessons about enemy police services and how to respond to lines of questioning. They were also taught how to live their cover with conviction.

4. GROUP B TESTING

During the Group B work, recruits were also given lessons in intelligence gathering and reporting their findings back to England via elementary coding before they took a practical passing-out test that lasted several days. Recruits were sent off in small groups with a specific mission – sabotage, theft of a Sten gun etc – which might also require them picking up an accomplice.

5. PARACHUTE TRAINING

Once recruits graduated from Beaulieu they were sent for technical training, including parachuting for those to be dropped overseas. This was taught from a merchant's house near Manchester. Drops were made into Tatton Park from Whitley aircraft. The drop suits were developed with pockets for a spade, so the agents could bury the parachute on landing.

6. SPECIALIST TRAINING

There were a number of specialist courses for graduates, like the wireless school at Thame Park. There were courses in safe-breaking and clandestine printing as well as advanced sabotage techniques. Of those who failed the early courses, many were sent to the 'cooler' at Inverlair, where they were encouraged to forget what they'd learned about secret operations.

EINAR SKINNARLAND

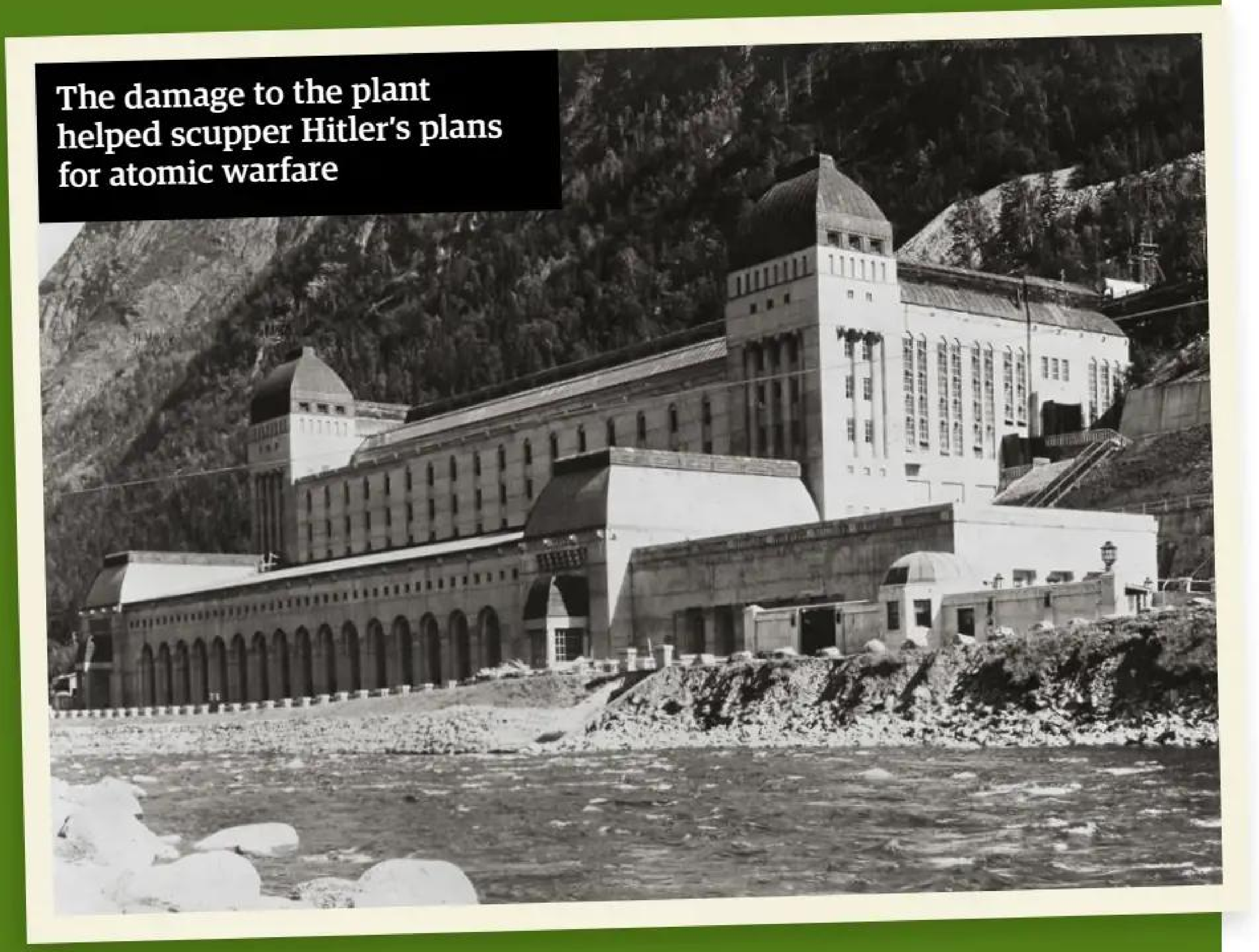
The Norwegian nationalist who helped thwart Hitler's atomic ambitions

When an SOE raiding party captured a Norwegian ship in March 1942, they discovered on board Einar Skinnarland, who was eager to help fight the German invaders in his homeland. He heralded from Rjukan, which was close to Vemok, home to Norsk Hydro, where the Germans were bidding to propel their atomic bomb development with the use of heavy water (deuterium oxide). A mission to destroy the plant passed to the SOE who parachuted Skinnarland back into Norway and there he befriended the chief engineer at the plant, learned plenty of information necessary for a coup de main operation, and relayed this by radio to the SOE.

On the ground, he then received a number of operatives who were to help with the landing of two British gliders carrying commando-engineers set to implement Operation Freshman. Sadly, both gliders crashed in bad weather and the survivors were captured, tortured and executed by the Gestapo. Security at the plant was beefed up.

Undeterred, Skinnarland and the SOE tried again and with Operation Gunnerside on 28/29th February 1943, they achieved their aim, Skinnarland helping commandos to sneak into the plant and set charges. The saboteurs only met one worker during the operation. He agreed to help, providing he was allowed to retrieve his eyeglasses! The explosion severely damaged the plant and wreaked havoc with Hitler's atomic ambitions. It is said that 3,000 German soldiers were dispatched to comb the area for the commandos, all of whom escaped, with four remaining in the region for further work with the Resistance.

The story was immortalised in the 1948 Franco-Norwegian film *Operation Swallow: The Battle For Heavy Water* and then the 1965 Kirk Douglas film *The Heroes Of Telemark*. Skinnarland continued to maintain radio contact between the local elements of the Norwegian resistance and SOE headquarters in London until the end of the war.


The damage to the plant helped scupper Hitler's plans for atomic warfare

A vial of deuterium oxide, a vital component of the Nazi's atomic bomb ambitions

HENRYK ZYGALSKI

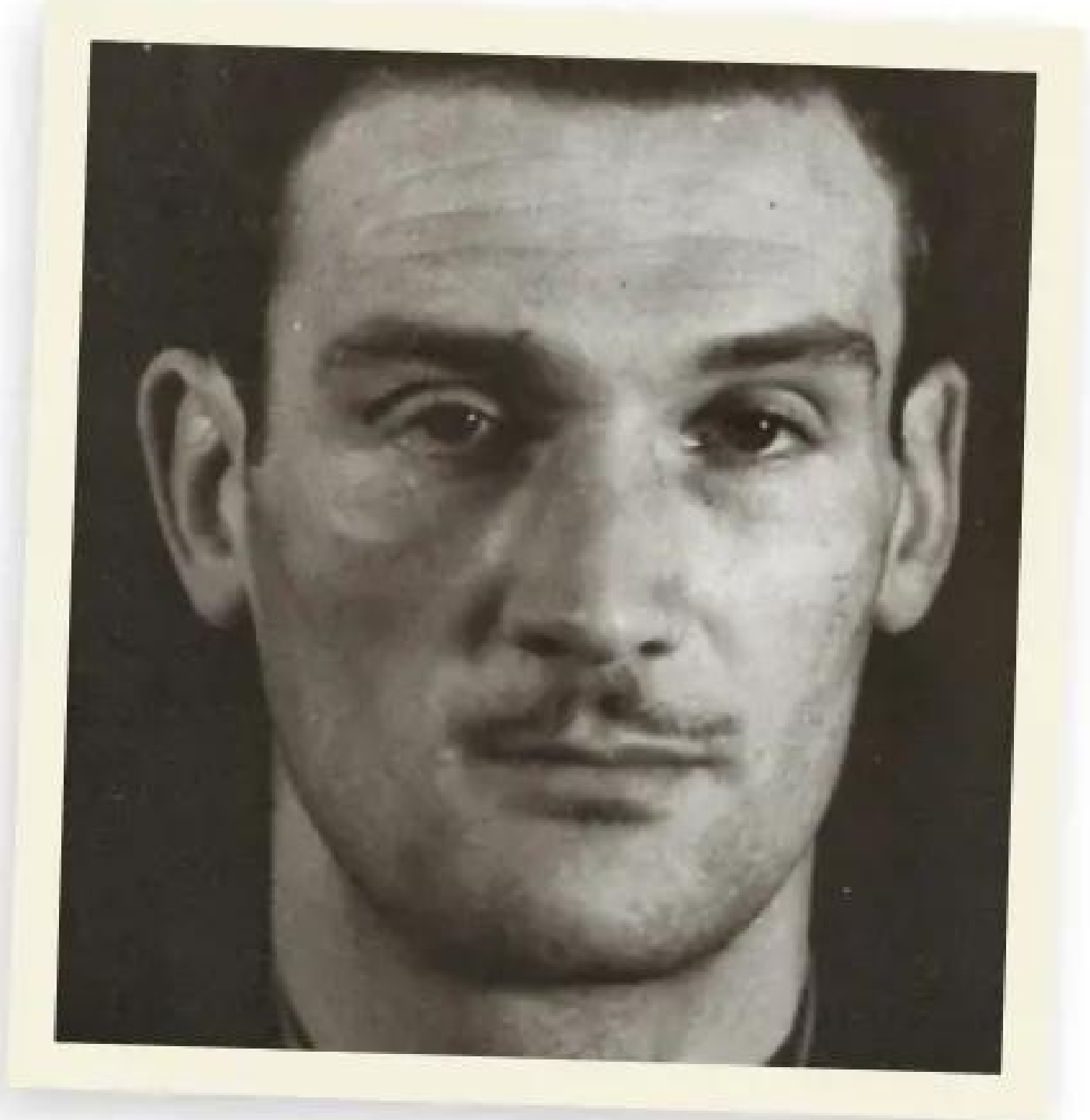
The Polish cryptologist who helped crack Enigma

One of a trio of Polish mathematicians who performed early cryptanalytic work on Enigma encoded German ciphers, Zygalski developed perforated sheets, later known as 'Zygalski sheets,' as keys to a manual method of determining settings of Enigma machine rotors. In 1939, Zygalski participated in a pivotal meeting near Warsaw with representatives of the British and French intelligence communities, revealing the substantial progress the Poles had made in cracking Enigma. Along with fellow Pole Marian Rejewski, Zygalski reached England in the summer of 1943. He joined the Polish Army and worked on other ciphers but was excluded from further involvement in Enigma.

EDDIE CHAPMAN

The criminal-turned-agent who won the Iron Cross

Eddie Chapman's release from prison in Jersey saw him emerge into an occupied land and he immediately offered his services to the German secret service, the Abwehr. He agreed to sabotage the De Havilland factory but on his return to the UK turned himself in and worked as a double agent, code-named ZigZag. With help from MI5 he faked the bombing of the factory before returning to Germany and may have been the only British citizen to earn an Iron Cross.



KIM PHILBY

The most notorious member of the Cambridge Five

Britain ran an excellent double-cross network but was not immune from the same treatment. Appointed to MI6 in 1940 Philby passed more than 1,000 secret documents to the Soviet Union. Notorious for his actions after World War II, in a perverse way his perfidy helped secure the allied war effort, convincing Stalin that Japan had no designs on the USSR and letting them concentrate their forces on the Eastern Front.

RONALD SETH

A double agent whose fantastic stories baffled friends and foes alike

After teaching in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, Ronald Seth volunteered to join the SOE in a bid to stir up revolt against the Nazis in the Baltic States. He was codenamed Blunderhead and in October 1942, parachuted into Estonia. Nothing more was heard from him until the April of the following year when a file fell into Allied hands detailing the capture and interrogation of a British spy called Ronald Seth who had, apparently, revealed everything about his SOE training and mission. The SOE's signal office was ordered to desist from listening out for any further contact.

Not long after the liberation of Paris, however, a document was passed to the War Office purporting to be from Blunderhead. It outlined a fantastic tale, recording how his initial landing had dropped him amid a group of German soldiers, whom he'd fought off before executing a sabotage campaign while living off the land. He was eventually captured and tortured, he said, and claimed that he agreed to help the Germans against the Russians.

His report revealed how he had worked in Paris and undergone training with the German secret service, Abwehr, although when the enemy lost confidence with him he was sent to a POW camp to serve as an informer. He maintained that all the while he was still serving the SOE. The intrigue was enhanced when another letter appeared a short while later claiming that he was now operating in a POW camp at Limburg under the name of Captain John De Witt.

Finally, in April 1945 as the war was coming to an end, he walked into the British legation in Bern, and said that he was carrying peace proposals from Himmler and should therefore be flown home. MI5 interrogated him at length and were unable to unpick the fact from fiction. Whatever its veracity, Blunderhead's story remains one of the most fantastic ever linked to an SOE agent.

> **"WHEN THE ENEMY LOST CONFIDENCE IN HIM HE WAS SENT TO A POW CAMP"**

Ethnic Germans in Tallinn cheer the arrival of the Wehrmacht and the retreat of the Red Army

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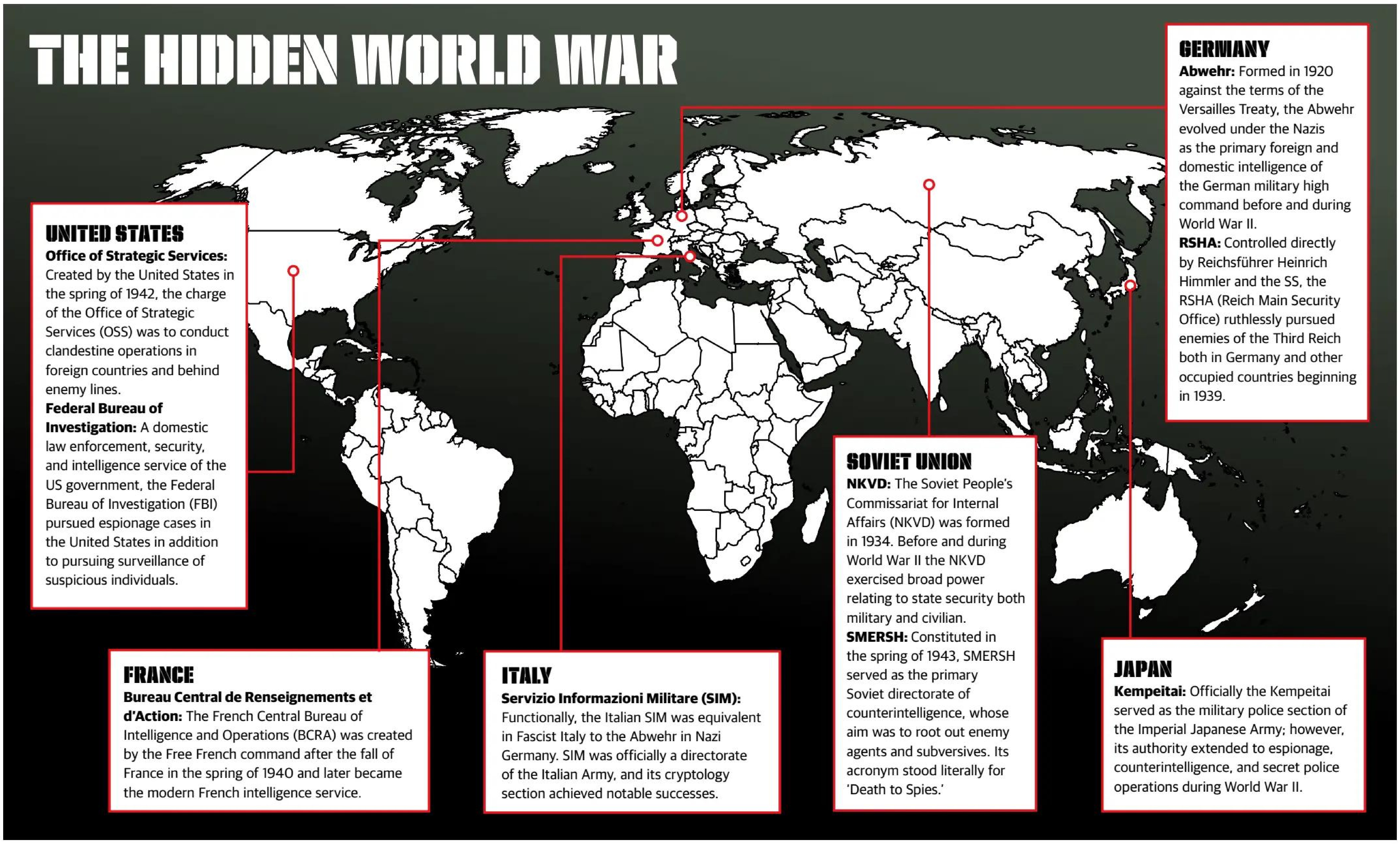
THE HIDDEN WORLD WAR



GERMANY

Abwehr: Formed in 1920 against the terms of the Versailles Treaty, the Abwehr evolved under the Nazis as the primary foreign and domestic intelligence of the German military high command before and during World War II.

RSHA: Controlled directly by Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler and the SS, the RSHA (Reich Main Security Office) ruthlessly pursued enemies of the Third Reich both in Germany and other occupied countries beginning in 1939.

UNITED STATES

Office of Strategic Services: Created by the United States in the spring of 1942, the charge of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was to conduct clandestine operations in foreign countries and behind enemy lines.

Federal Bureau of Investigation: A domestic law enforcement, security, and intelligence service of the US government, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) pursued espionage cases in the United States in addition to pursuing surveillance of suspicious individuals.

SOVIET UNION

NKVD: The Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) was formed in 1934. Before and during World War II the NKVD exercised broad power relating to state security both military and civilian.

SMERSH: Constituted in the spring of 1943, SMERSH served as the primary Soviet directorate of counterintelligence, whose aim was to root out enemy agents and subversives. Its acronym stood literally for 'Death to Spies.'

FRANCE

Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action: The French Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations (BCRA) was created by the Free French command after the fall of France in the spring of 1940 and later became the modern French intelligence service.

ITALY

Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM): Functionally, the Italian SIM was equivalent in Fascist Italy to the Abwehr in Nazi Germany. SIM was officially a directorate of the Italian Army, and its cryptology section achieved notable successes.

JAPAN

Kempeitai: Officially the Kempeitai served as the military police section of the Imperial Japanese Army; however, its authority extended to espionage, counterintelligence, and secret police operations during World War II.

Enigma

HOW BRITAIN'S CODEBREAKERS TURNED THE TIDE IN WWII

Discover how the men and women of Bletchley Park cracked the 'unbreakable' German Enigma and helped defeat Hitler's Nazis

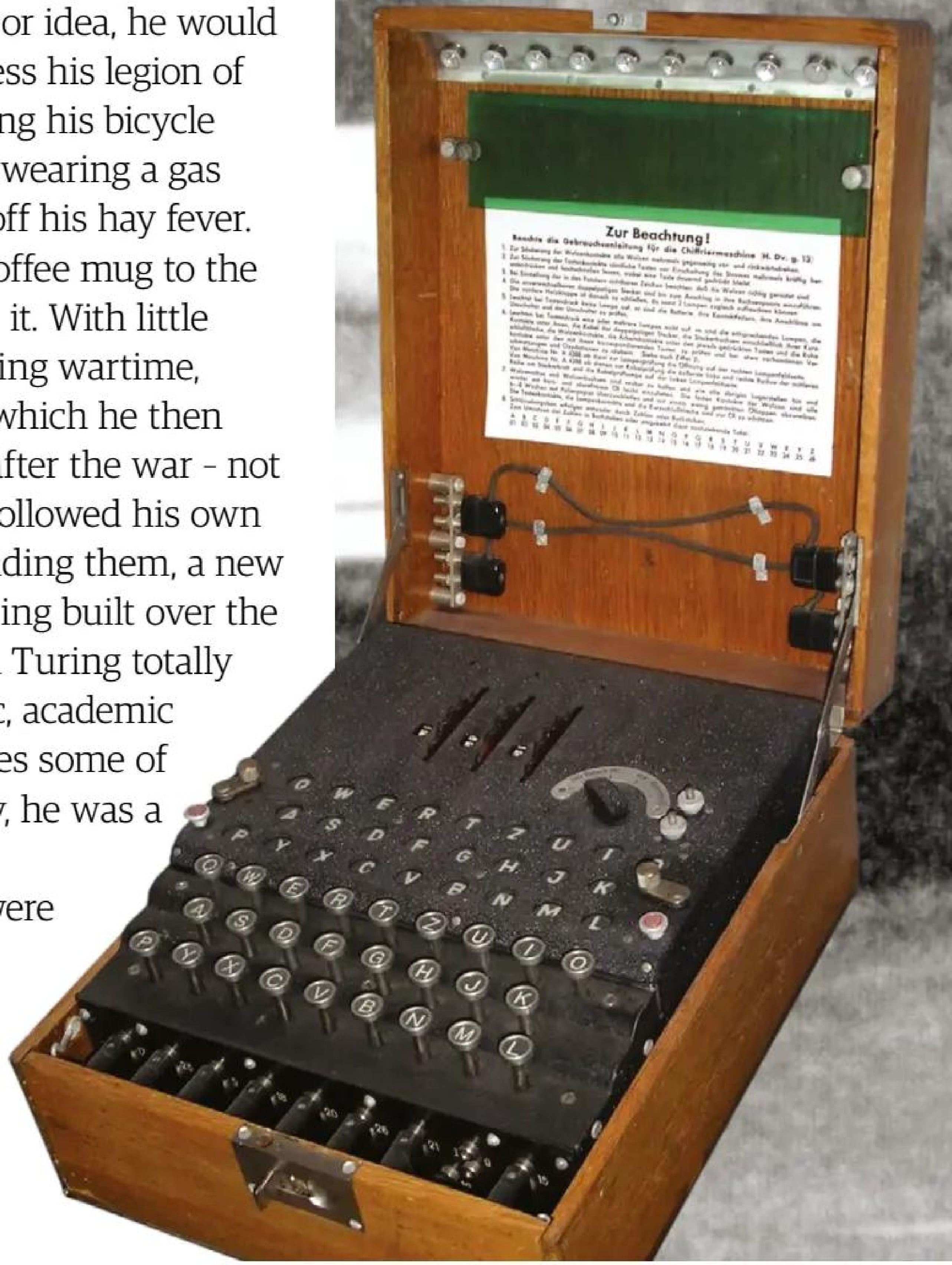
It's February 1942; the carnage of World War II shows no signs of stopping and the balance of world power is precariously poised. Night is about to fall on the Atlantic Ocean and as darkness comes the water is inky-black and icy. In the depths of seas around the world, German U-boats cruise like predators stalking their prey. They lie in wait, patiently waiting their turn to pounce; brazenly, some even encircle convoys, sailing invisibly around them. On this night, one U-boat fires off its torpedoes and an American convoy ship is engulfed in bright flames that light up the sky. The crew on this convoy know they will perish in this icy sea and that the vital supplies and provisions they are carrying across the Atlantic to Britain will also be lost. As screams and shouts finally give way to an eerie silence, its neighbours can only watch helplessly, fearing their turn may soon come. The deadly wolfpack have claimed another victim. The Allies are virtually defenceless against them, knowing only that these deadly ships will strike again, but not where or when.

As the year draws to a close a German U-boat, the U-559, is spotted off the coast of Palestine by HMS Petard and subsequently depth-charged. This time it is the U-boat crew who know that all is lost: their vessel is sinking and they must abandon ship. Lieutenant Anthony Fasson, Able Seaman Colin Grazier and Tommy Brown swim out to it, even though the boat is rapidly sinking below the waves. Seeing some lights remaining on inside the boat, they are astounded to find a four-rotor Enigma (the machine the Germans use for communications) and a book of current Enigma keys. In an act of bravery and ingenuity, they wrap the machine, the keys and the bigram tables in waterproof material, and rescue them for the Allies, not realising how vital their discovery will prove to be. With supreme effort, they manage to reach 16-year-old Naafi boy Tommy Brown, who has waited outside the boat, and hand him the machine and the books. It is the last act of Fasson and Grazier, for they go down with U-559 as it sinks. They are both posthumously awarded the George Cross.

This treasure – for that is what it was to the British codebreakers – made its way to Bletchley Park, a country house in rural Buckinghamshire that had been set up as Intelligence Headquarters at the start of the war. Those based there knew they now had a good chance to get back into breaking the German naval codes, codenamed 'Shark', and affect the outcome of World War II. An eccentric young mathematician named Alan Turing would have a key role to play in breaking the Nazi code.

Born in 1912, Turing came to Bletchley from Cambridge, aged 27, the day after Britain declared war on Germany. His clothes were dishevelled, at best; others thought he often dressed like a tramp. When excited over some problem or idea, he would stutter with his eagerness to express his legion of ideas. He would often be seen riding his bicycle around the Bletchley countryside, wearing a gas mask to avoid the pollen that set off his hay fever. In his office, he would chain his coffee mug to the radiator so no one else would take it. With little faith in banking and currency during wartime, he put his money into silver bars which he then buried, intending to dig them up after the war – not realising that by the time he had followed his own elaborate set of instructions for finding them, a new town called Milton Keynes was being built over the countryside. To the onlooker, Alan Turing totally fitted the bill of a typical, eccentric, academic boffin; to his colleagues, themselves some of the brightest minds in the country, he was a true genius of his time.

The Allies knew the Germans were using a machine named Enigma and teams of codebreakers



German forces disguised their communications through the Enigma machine

Glossary

Enigma: Resembling an expanded typewriter, the Germans used this machine for communication. It is a portable machine that enciphers and deciphers messages using a keyboard, rotors and electrical impulses in order to generate millions of possible letter combinations.

Typex machine: Standard British cipher machine with special modifications so that it operated like Enigma, with rotors, keyboard and a paper feed with a printer. It was used to turn encrypted text back into German.

Bombe: Not a computer, but an electronic machine that could check off, at speed, hundreds of possible letter combinations to reduce the potential number of that day's possible Enigma settings.

Crib: An intelligent guess by looking for patterns in the coded text, usually found in common phrases or words used by the German operators, or sometimes by spotting their mistakes, such as lazy, repeated word use, use of their girlfriend's name, or a rude word.

Cillis: Procedural errors by German Enigma operators, where they used recognisable message settings instead of random, or had failed to alter the rotor wheel position before sending their text.

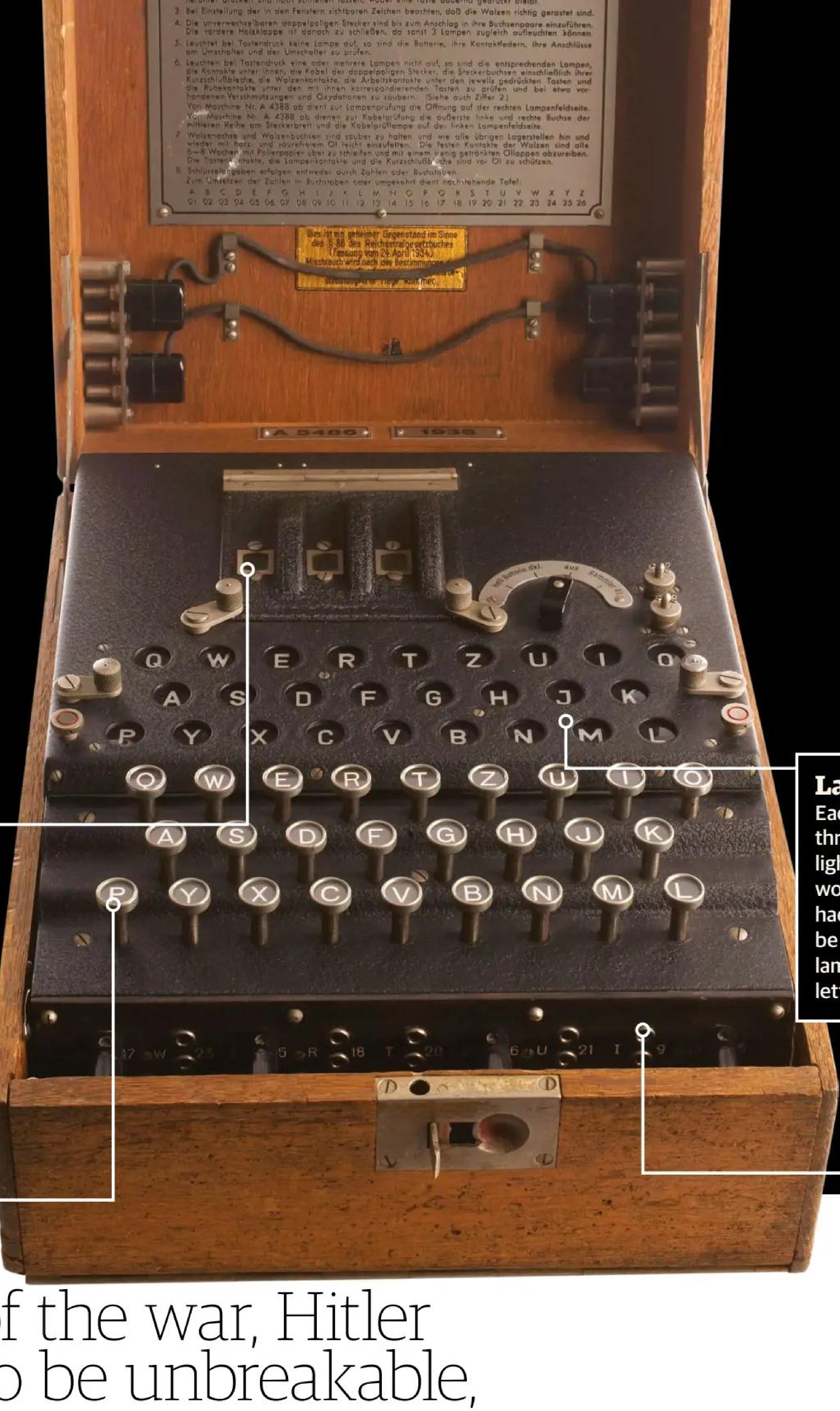
Menu: A set of diagrams based on that day's 'cribs', to feed into the Bombes to help reduce the length of time needed to confirm that day's Enigma settings.

Wrens: Name given to members of the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Colossus: The world's first semi-programmable computer. A practical, digital processing machine, it used 1,500 valves and could do mathematical calculations in hours that had taken weeks by hand.

The 'unbreakable' Enigma

Discover the main devices on the complicated and portable German communications machine



Rotors
The standard Enigma had three rotors, the advanced machine had four. These scrambled messages into unintelligible cipher text. Each rotor had numbered ring scales for each of the German Armed Forces and the rotors could be changed daily. The settings were changed at midnight and each rotor could be set to any one of 26 different ring settings.

Keyboard
As the operator pressed one of the 'typewriter' keys, an electric current was sent through the rotating code-letter wheels. No Enigma letter could ever be enciphered as itself. The recipient operator would type into his machine the received Morse message in the same order.

Lampboard
Each typed key sent an electrical impulse through the machine and a letter would light up on the adjacent lampboard. This would be repeated until the whole message had been enciphered, when it would then be radioed in Morse to its recipient. The lampboard would light up with the real letters as the cipher was typed in.

Plugboard
This made the machine's wiring much more complicated, increasing the possible encoding combinations by millions. The plugboard settings could also be changed daily. The A-socket of the plugboard connected to the first terminal inside the entry plate, the B-socket to the second, and so on.

DILLY KNOX

British, 1884-1943

Brief Bio

Knox worked with Turing from September 1939 at Bletchley, from where the first breaks into daily-changing Enigma were made. Knox and his team, Intelligence Service Knox, broke the German Secret Service (Abwehr) codes in December 1941. An Old Etonian and a student from King's College, Cambridge, Knox was regarded as brilliant but eccentric. His background was in classics rather than mathematics.

> "For the duration of the war, Hitler believed Enigma to be unbreakable, especially after the German Army changed the cipher daily instead of once every few months"

at Bletchley were trying to crack the code this machine used. The teams worked in newly constructed prefabricated huts, each given a number instead of a name for secrecy. In Hut 8 they were concentrating on cracking the German Naval ciphers. They already knew that Naval Enigma operators were more careful than Army operators, thus making it harder to use educated guesses, or 'cribs', to spot German mistakes. But now they realised the number of possible settings were hugely expanded, due to the increase in code wheels on the four-rotor Enigma. Turing, already working on updating the Polish Bombe machines, realised the vital importance of having machines that could speed up the process by mechanically checking off these millions of settings combinations.

While at Cambridge before the war, Turing had developed an original idea: a 'Universal Turing Machine', a sort of 'super-typewriter' that could identify symbols, write, erase and carry out other tasks, all automatically and without human intervention. However, having studied previous Polish encryption machines and a replica Enigma, Turing knew he needed more than even his hypothetical machine. So he studied the mechanics of Enigma, the rotors, wiring and boards, and sought to devise an electrical system with circuits that could decrypt that same text.

Human intervention, Turing knew, was still essential: 'cribs' and mathematical work would still be needed to help the Bombe machine, the device that would decipher encrypted German messages. The thought of a machine capable of checking millions of combinations at speed was revolutionary. However, Turing was a theoretician rather than a practical codebreaker, so Gordon Welchman, a codebreaker and brilliant administrator working in Hut 6, recruited Oliver

A brief history of WWII's codemakers and breakers

1923

Invention
A Dutch invention, the first cipher motor machine is patented by Dr Arthur Scherbius, who markets it at the 1923 International Postal Union Congress for use in banking, but it proves unsuccessful. Enigma is marketed for use in Germany's armed forces instead for its potential for military use.

1932

The Poles
Three Polish mathematicians – Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski and Jerzy Rozycki – make the first break into military Enigma using mathematical methods. This includes the invention of Zygalski sheets, a slow and time-consuming method that was used in the days before advances were made to the Enigma machine.

1939

Sharing secrets
In July, a secret meeting takes place in Poland between representatives of Bletchley Park (Peter Twinn, Dilly Knox, Alan Turing and Tony Kendrick) and Gustav Bertrand of French Intelligence, to share discoveries made since 1932 by Polish cryptanalysts. By September, the Poles have passed models of Enigma to British intelligence.

1940

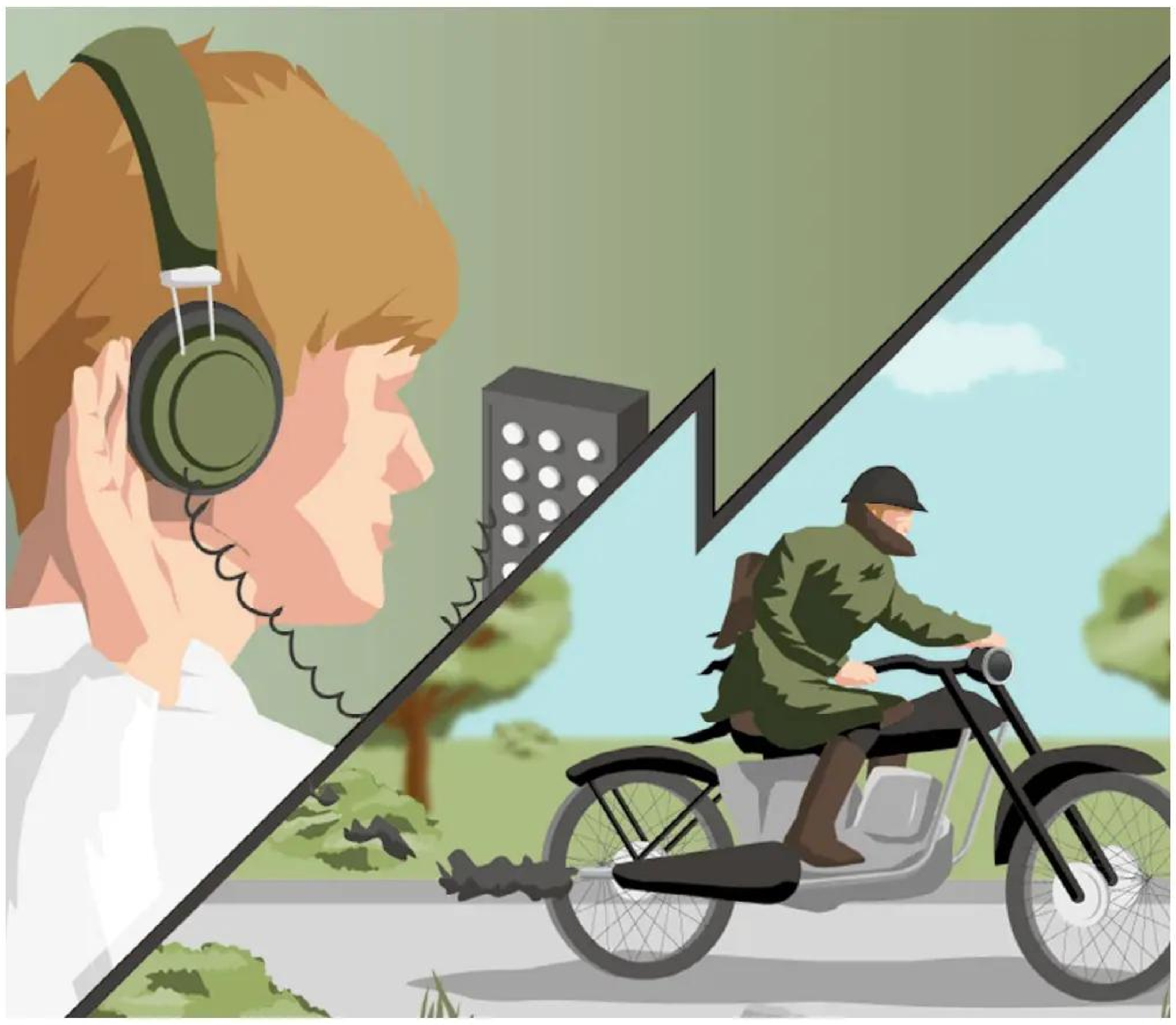
Breaks, Bombes and tips
In January the 'Green' (Army) and 'Red' (Luftwaffe) Enigma keys are cracked and in February the sinking of U-33 brings Bletchley its first 'pinch': an Enigma machine. By March the first Bombe machine, 'Victory', is installed into Hut 1 and later that year a new Enigma key is introduced.

Step-by-step guide to codebreaking

Follow our five-point guide to crack codes like they did in Bletchley Park

01 Listen to the enemy to gather the intelligence

At Station X, Bletchley originally used a radio-transmitting room at the top of the Mansion House's turreted tower to intercept Morse, teleprinter and radio codes. However, Bletchley's secret location needed protection, so a series of 'Y' stations were set up across the country. Intercepts were sent to Bletchley either by motorcycle courier or by direct teleprinter line and were logged into the Registration Room.



02 Break the cipher using mathematics and cribs

Using brainpower and ingenuity, the codebreakers first worked by hand by looking for features that corresponded to the original plain text. Using cribs and contact analysis, the codebreakers could often spot a possible pattern in the text. Human error on the part of the operators and psychology (imagining how the operators might undertake their work) also came into play when looking for cribs.

03 Make sense of the nonsense

Process and check that day's 'cribs', then set up the Typex machines to the same settings as the Enigma machine and type in the enciphered message. Once deciphered it would come out on long strips of paper; cut and glued onto the back of the original message, they were sent back to Hut 6 to finish any decryption left over via a specially built chute and then ultimately to Hut 3 for final translation and strategic analysis by a special team.

04 Translate and understand the German plain text

Hut 3 would use linguists to translate German, Italian and Japanese codes, using the decrypted text sent from Hut 6. At this stage, the Index room would check and cross-reference to see if anything could be spotted that had been seen before using Hollerith machines and thousands of index cards in Block C. Once analysed, the information was ready to send on as usable intelligence to Churchill in his daily update.

05 Send intelligence to Churchill and commanders in the field

Only a few commanders knew about Bletchley and they were forbidden to act on its findings, codenamed 'Ultra', until the Germans had been deceived into thinking it had come from another source altogether. 'Special Communication Units' were set up to feed information to the field, first in France in May 1940, then in North Africa and elsewhere from March 1941. All 'Ultra' messages were destroyed once received.

1941

Cracking Dolphin

Using the 'rodding' technique, the Italian Naval cipher is broken after the Battle of Matapan by Dilly Knox and his 'girls.' With the recovery of Enigma coding documents and notebooks from German submarines, notably U-110, along with repetitive weather transmissions, Bletchley is finally able to read German Naval Enigma.

1942

Cracking Shark

In February, the Germans introduce a more complex four-rotor Enigma for U-boats: 'Shark', leading to a blackout. In October, two German short-signal codebooks arrive at Bletchley, rescued from U-559 by Fasson and Grazier on HMS Petard. Shaun Wylie and the Hut 8 codebreakers can now break Shark and read U-boat traffic.

1943

Colossus

The Germans introduce a new short weather code, but Hut 8 avoid another blackout with the help of the faster Bombes. Shark is re-broken within ten days – a deciding factor in the Second Battle of the Atlantic. Max Newman and Tommy Flowers design and build Colossus, the world's first semi-programmable computer.

1944

D-Day success

Hut 8 and Hut 4's crucial decryption and translation of German Naval Enigma plays a key role in the Double Cross deception, codenamed Operation Fortitude South, fooling Hitler into believing the Allied landings were planned for Pas de Calais and not Normandy, thus having a huge impact on the outcome of D-Day.

Eyewitness
Jean Valentine

The former member of the Women's Royal Naval Service served at Bletchley

Image courtesy of Bletchley Park Trust

How did you come to be at Bletchley?
I grew up in Perth, Scotland, and when I was 18 I decided to join up. I took an intelligence test at a local Navy recruiting centre. When I got my summons, I was given a railway warrant to go to a training centre for Wrens in Dumbartonshire. After two weeks I was told I was going to be sent to London, but was not told what my work would be. I was then sent on from London to a Y Station in Eastcote, Middlesex, where I first saw a Bombe machine. Later I was sent to work at Bletchley Park.

Were you aware of the other work going on at the Park?
No, everything was compartmentalised. When I was working on the Bombes, if we got a possible result we would phone it through to an extension number: it wasn't until after the war that I realised I had been phoning Hut 6 just across the path! If the menu had worked and German text came out on the tape, it went to the pink hut just opposite Hut 11 where it was translated into English. Apart from that small section of the Park, I had nothing to do with any other work carried out elsewhere.

What did you do in your free time?
We used to go to the village hop on a free Saturday night. There were lots of clubs and societies at the Park, which men and women could attend if their shifts allowed and if they could get to and from their billets to attend: music, theatre, sports; [it featured] a huge variety.

What was the work like?
The shifts were quite arduous: 8am to 4pm, 4pm to midnight or midnight to 8am. Once you had learnt how to work the Bombe it wasn't complicated, just repetitive. The Bombe would search for answers and would stop if it thought it had found one. It was noisy, but like a tickety-click noise; it didn't really bother me, although it did others. We were young and disciplined and knew we were part of the war effort so we just got on with it. I found the work a rather fascinating experience; I enjoyed it! There were all sorts of people working at the Park, all different classes, and we just all worked together. Everyone was treated the same, whether military or civilian. The night shifts were a bit disruptive – especially on our eating patterns. There were some cases of burnout: I was once sent to the sick bay and slept for nearly three days! Then I had two weeks leave and came back refreshed.

What did you do after Bletchley?
In 1944 when I was 19 years old, I was sent to Ceylon to work on Japanese meteorological codes; I stayed there for 15 months. I never told a soul I was working at Bletchley Park. It was a great surprise when the first book came out in 1974 and the big secret was out. However, many people were uncomfortable with talking about Bletchley after all that time, and some are still.

Lawn, a mathematician from Cambridge, to help with the making of the machine; thus 'Victory', the first Bombe, was built and installed in Hut 1 on 18 March 1940. Welchman later improved the design of the Bombe with an electronic diagonal board, which increased the machine's powers and capabilities.

Although the German Air Force Enigma was by now being read daily, Naval Enigma proved a tougher nut to crack. In 1941, two significant sea battles - one inside the Arctic Circle, one in the Atlantic - led to the recovery of Enigma coding documents. It was with this information that Turing calculated a new method he called 'Banburismus', because it involved holes punched on long pieces of paper made at Banbury. For the rest of the summer of 1941, Bletchley was able to read the majority of German Naval Enigma, thus providing vital protection to British shipping and a real success story for Bletchley. A significant breakthrough had been achieved, but the team would face tougher battles as the war rumbled on.

The genesis of Bletchley occurs in August 1938 when, at a small rural railway station half way between the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge, a group of ordinary looking people arrive for a social gathering at Bletchley's Victorian country house. Led by Captain Ridley, the entourage are here to enjoy that simple but favoured pursuit of the upper classes: a shooting party weekend. Or are they? In fact, the group of men assembling at this isolated location in the depths of the Buckinghamshire countryside are all either members of MI6 and the Government Code & Cipher School (GC&CS), or esteemed scholars and academics, turned codebreakers. For now, they will assess the mansion house and its surrounding area as a possible location to site intelligence operations in the event of a war that seems likelier with every inflamed speech Hitler gives.

GORDON WELCHMAN

British, 1906-1985

Brief Bio

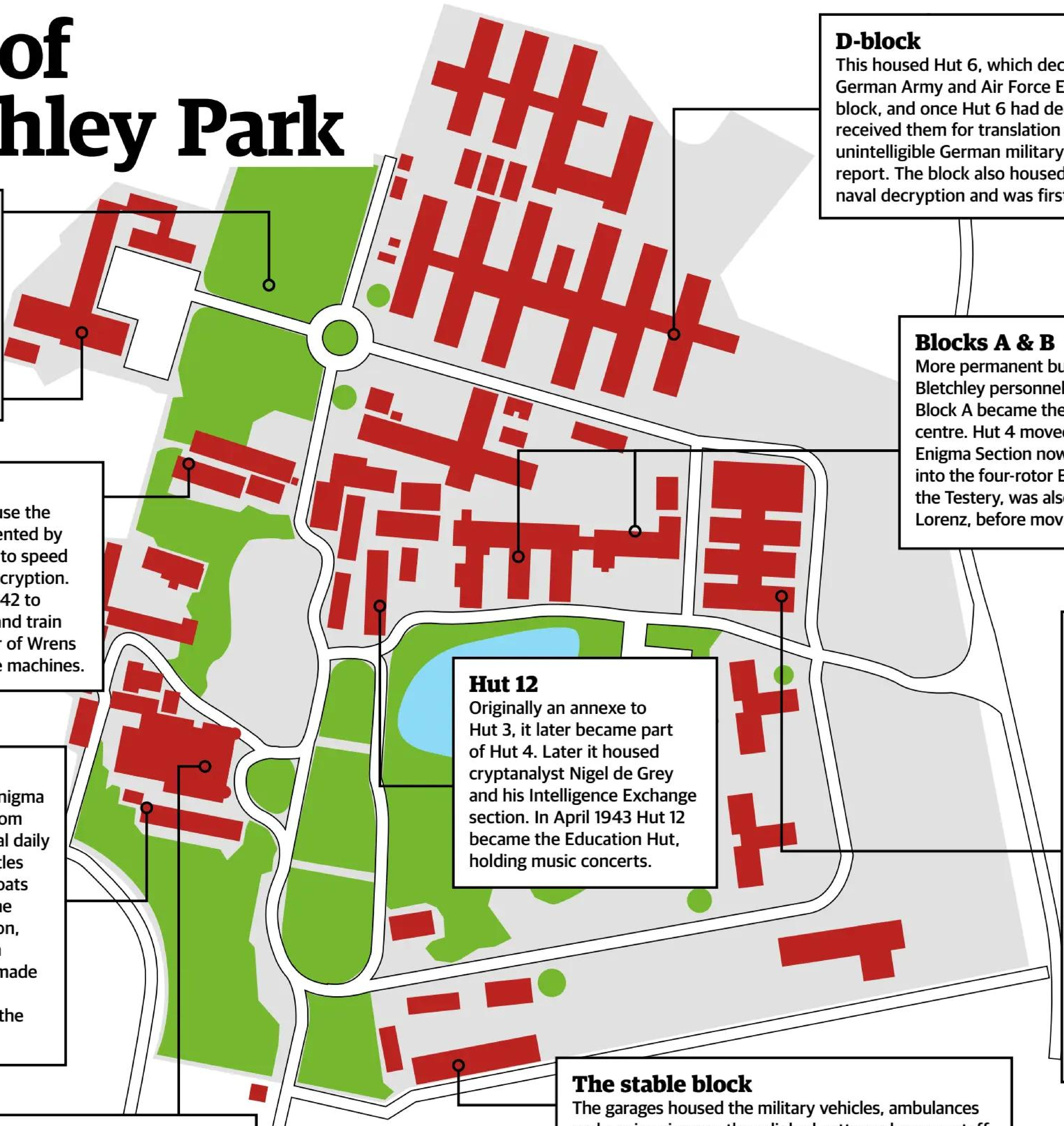
Recruited by Alastair Denniston from Cambridge, after a short two-week course in London in March 1939, he reported to work at Bletchley on 4 September. He instigated Hut 6 Traffic Analysis (SIXTA), and with his immense organisational skills he turned Bletchley Park from a cottage industry to an efficient organisation taking in intercepts and outputting intelligence 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year.

When the inevitable happens, they and others return to begin the work that some later believed shortened the war by two years. Men and women from all walks of life will descend onto the railway platform and begin the walk up to Bletchley Park: mathematicians, classicists, engineers, Wrens, WAAFs, linguists, typists, administrators and even debutantes. Each will become a small cog in a large wheel, working independently and under extreme secrecy, unaware of the work being carried out in any hut outside their own. Having signed the Official Secrets Act, they are aware only of the vital importance their work could be to the war effort and that they can never speak of it to anyone.

Despite their undoubted brilliance, it wasn't the British at Bletchley who first made a break into Enigma: that distinction belongs to another nation entirely. In 1932, the Polish had first cracked Enigma; at the time, the cipher changed only once every few months, but by the outbreak of the war it was daily. With the invasion of Poland imminent, they turned to the British for help in breaking the Enigma settings, now running at an intimidating 15 trillion possible combinations - that's a staggering 15 billion billion.

Teams of top codebreakers were installed at Bletchley Park in the prefabricated numbered huts. These teams were led by Dilly Knox, John Jeffreys, Peter Twinn and Alan Turing. The first breakthrough came with the unravelling of the administrative key used by the German Army, simply known as 'The Green.' This was followed by breaking the 'Red' key, which was used by the Luftwaffe. Of course, it was of paramount importance that the secret that Enigma's code was being broken was kept secure, so a cover MI6 'spy', nicknamed 'Boniface', was invented; throughout the war, Germany believed any breaks in intelligence came as a result of double agents working in the field, instead of a remote codebreaking team.

Map of Bletchley Park



Blocks F & H
These housed the Testery, Newmanry and the Heath Robinson and Colossus machines. Block F also housed Japanese codebreaking.

Huts 11 and 11A
Hut 11 was built to house the Bombe machines, invented by Turing and Welchman to speed up Enigma settings decryption. Hut 11A was built in 1942 to house more Bombes and train the increasing number of Wrens needed to operate the machines.

Hut 4
Used for decrypting Enigma messages sent over from Hut 8, providing crucial daily intelligence in the battles between German U-boats and Allied convoys. The Double Cross Deception, codenamed Operation Fortitude South, was made possible by messages processed in Hut 4 in the lead-up to D-Day.

The mansion
Headquarters and recreational; housed senior staff's offices. Originally held the telephone exchange and teleprinter rooms, later moved to a blast-proof hut. This Victorian country house also had a dining room, library, billiard room and ballroom.

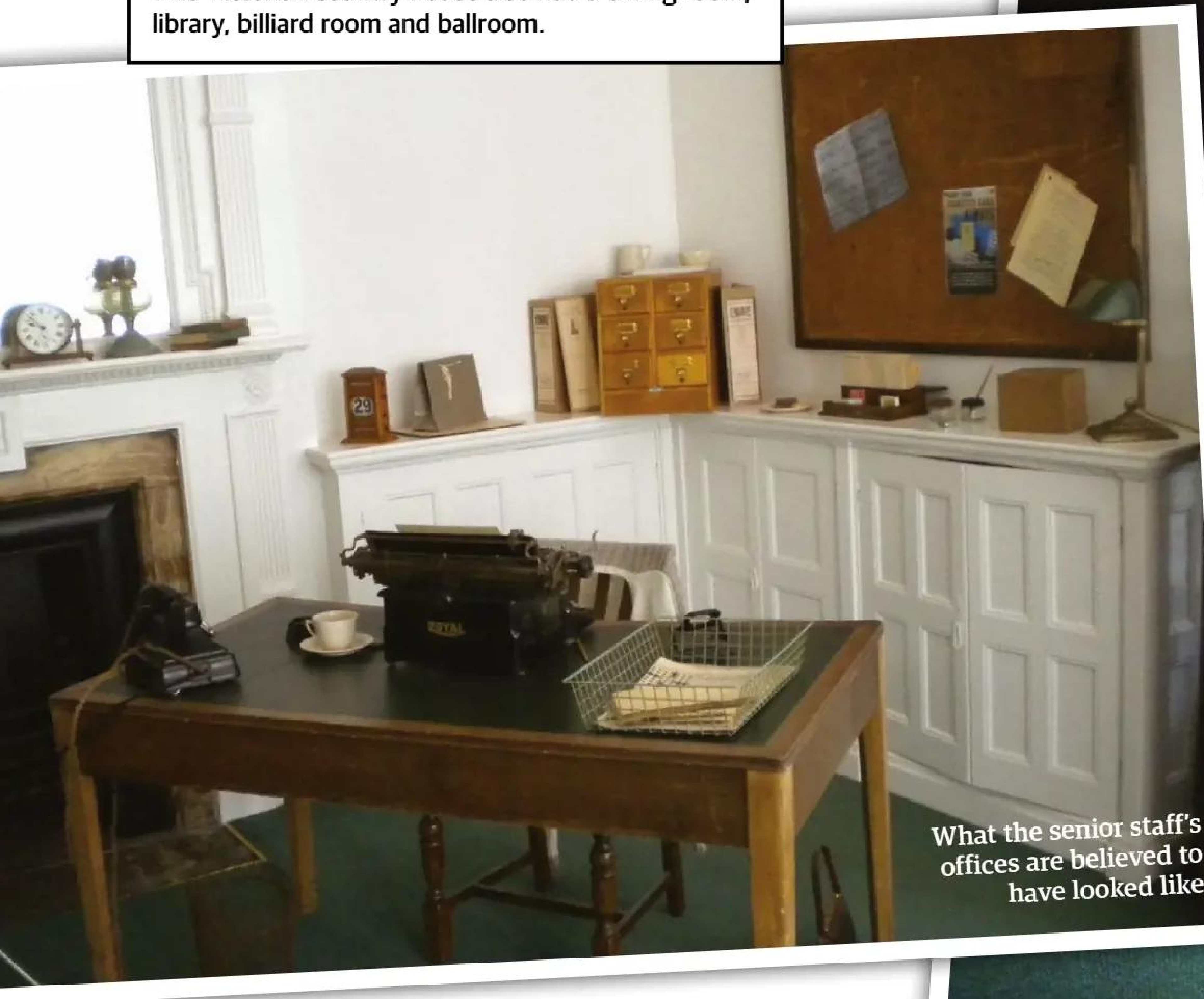
D-block
This housed Hut 6, which decrypted daily settings of the German Army and Air Force Enigma. Hut 3 was also in this block, and once Hut 6 had decrypted the messages, Hut 3 received them for translation and analysis, making often-unintelligible German military language read like a credible report. The block also housed Hut 8, which was used for naval decryption and was first headed by Turing.

Blocks A & B
More permanent buildings were needed as Bletchley personnel outgrew the wooden huts. Block A became the Naval Section's decoding centre. Hut 4 moved to Block B in 1942. The Naval Enigma Section now concentrated on breaking into the four-rotor Enigma. Ralph Tester's section, the Testery, was also housed here to break into Lorenz, before moving into Block F.

Block C
A huge clerical index was created by punching onto cards using Hollerith machines. Clerical staff built up a cross-referencing system to help the codebreakers, detailing names of personnel, locations and units. Each week, up to two million cards were used; they were stored in thousands of brown cardboard boxes. Each card was photographed and sent to the Bodleian Library in Oxford as a back-up.

Hut 12
Originally an annexe to Hut 3, it later became part of Hut 4. Later it housed cryptanalyst Nigel de Grey and his Intelligence Exchange section. In April 1943 Hut 12 became the Education Hut, holding music concerts.

The stable block
The garages housed the military vehicles, ambulances and carrier pigeons; three linked cottages became staff accommodation; the former fruit store became Turing and Knox's 'think-tank' room, known as 'the bungalow'.



What the senior staff's offices are believed to have looked like

The British used Typex cipher machines from 1937

The codebreaking mechanism was industrialised by the Bombe machine, invented by Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman in response to the need to speed up the process of running through all the possible Enigma wheel configurations. Operated by Wrens, the work was hot, smelly and noisy, but it was invaluable. By 1942, Bletchley's success had reached North Africa, where intelligence enabled the Royal Navy to cut Rommel's supply lines and keep General Montgomery informed of his every move. Early that year, however, the Germans introduced a more complex Enigma machine with an extra rotor. This caused a major information blackout and proved to be one of the greatest challenges to the codebreakers at Bletchley. However, by the end of 1942, the codebreakers had cracked that one too, thanks to the bravery of the seamen Fasson and Grazier who captured vital Enigma keys and books from the sinking U-559. From now on, Bletchley was able to read 'Shark'.

OLIVER LAWN

British, 1919-2012

Brief Bio

A mathematician and cryptanalyst, Lawn was recruited from Jesus College, Cambridge in July 1940 by Welchman to work on German Army and Air Force Enigma. Working in Hut 6 and then in Block D, he contributed to the design of the Bombes (high speed, four wheel) in 1943. In January 1944 he made the first break into new Enigma 'Uncle D' – a German modification of the three-rotor Army and Air Force Enigma with new reflector wheel and pluggable wiring.

However, it was the breaking of the German's strategic ciphers that gave Bletchley arguably its greatest success. Initially, manual efforts enabled the cracking of these ciphers, used by Hitler to communicate with Berlin and his commanders in the field. Professor Max Newman realised a new type of machine was needed to keep up with the increasing volume of intercepts being received. With the help of a brilliant young General Post Office (GPO) engineer, Tommy Flowers, such a machine was designed and constructed. This became known as Colossus: the world's first semi-programmable electronic computer and it became essential to the planning by Allied forces for the invasion of Europe and operation D-Day.

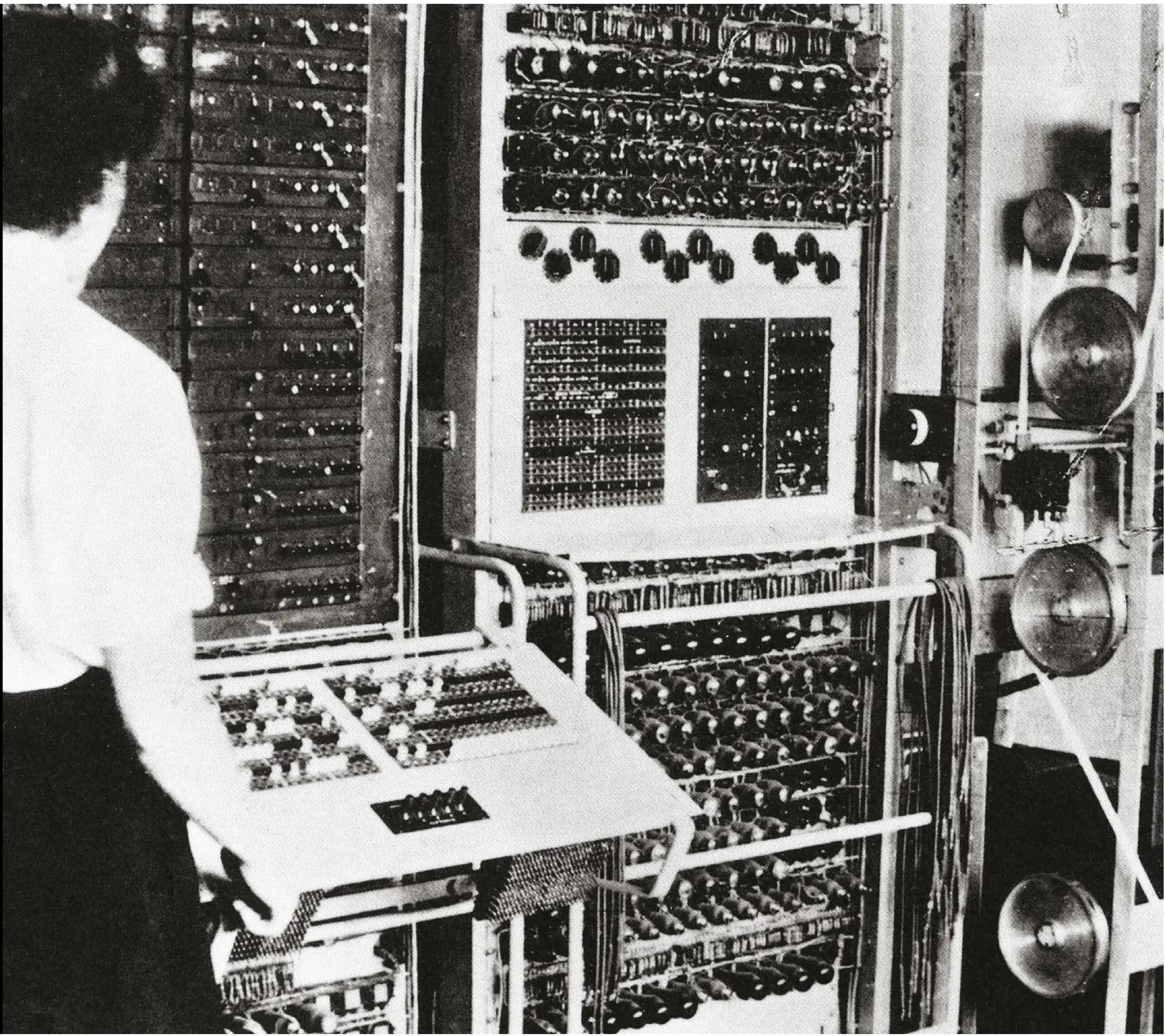
Such successes were hoped for at that first 'shooting party' at the mansion in 1938, but, certainly in the beginning, there were many – even within the government itself – who doubted the impact codebreakers could make to the strategic planning of the war. Of these codebreakers, perhaps the most famous known today is Alan Turing. He may have looked and even acted like a true eccentric, but he possessed one of the finest brains of his generation, and his unique ideas for a 'Universal Turing Machine' undoubtedly laid the groundwork not only for the development of the electronic machines built inside Bletchley as the War progressed, but also for the concept of the computer age. Even in a setting such as Bletchley that was filled with great minds he stood out, leading the historian and wartime codebreaker Asa Briggs to comment, "You needed exceptional talent, you needed genius at Bletchley and Turing's was that genius."

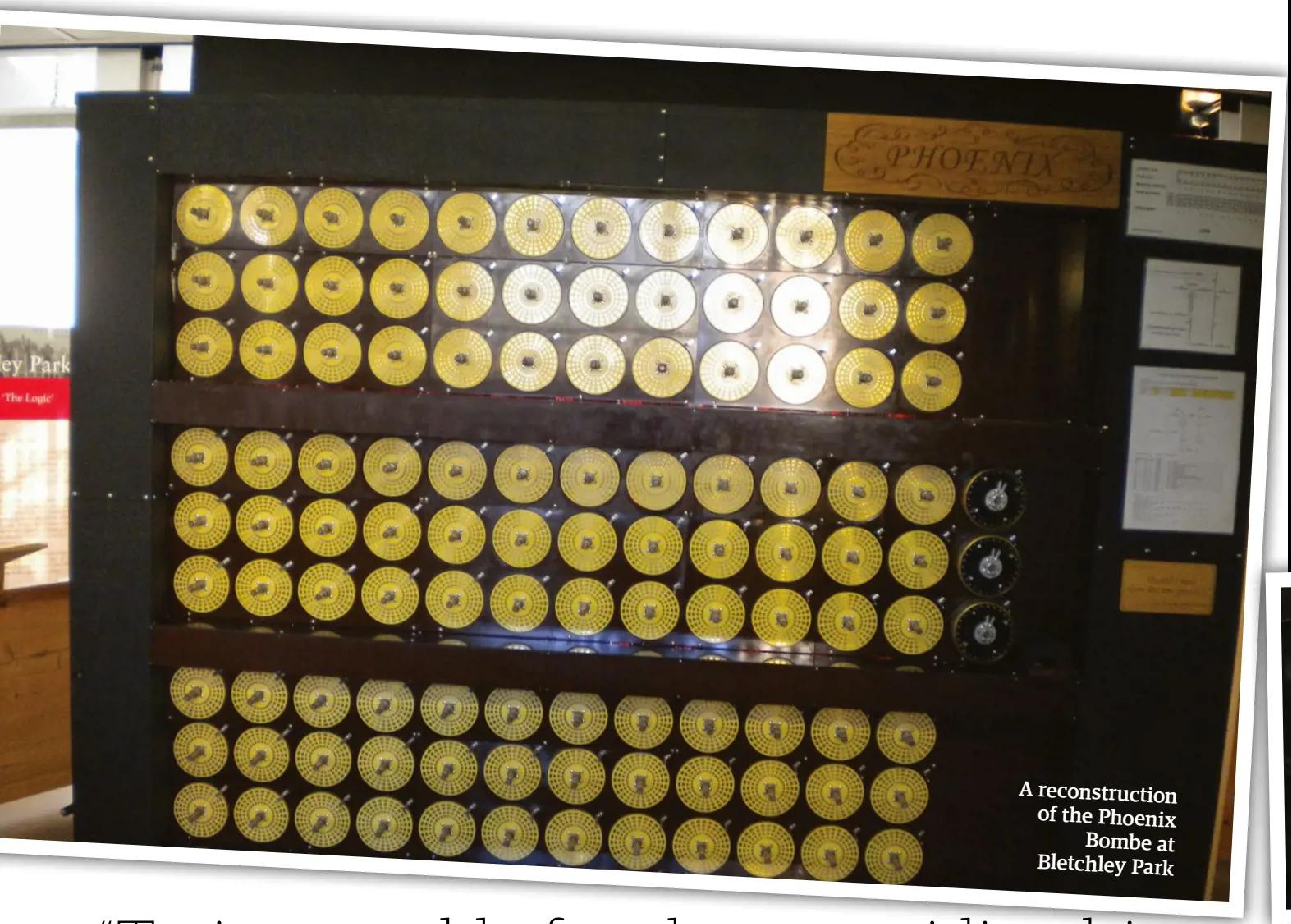
Of all his colleagues and codebreakers at Bletchley, his work with Tommy Flowers may have excited Turing the most. They first met in 1939, when the talented young GPO engineer was first introduced to the Enigma secret. Both men were enthusiastic, experts in their fields and respected each other from the outset. Turing would sometimes visit Flowers at his laboratory workshop in Dollis Hill, where they first discussed the idea of building a machine that could decrypt Enigma by using electromagnets. While this would prove to be beyond the scope of the technology then available, Turing's blueprints and vision for such a machine stayed with Flowers and later resulted in Colossus.

Churchill's golden geese

The British PM was one of Bletchley Park's biggest supporters

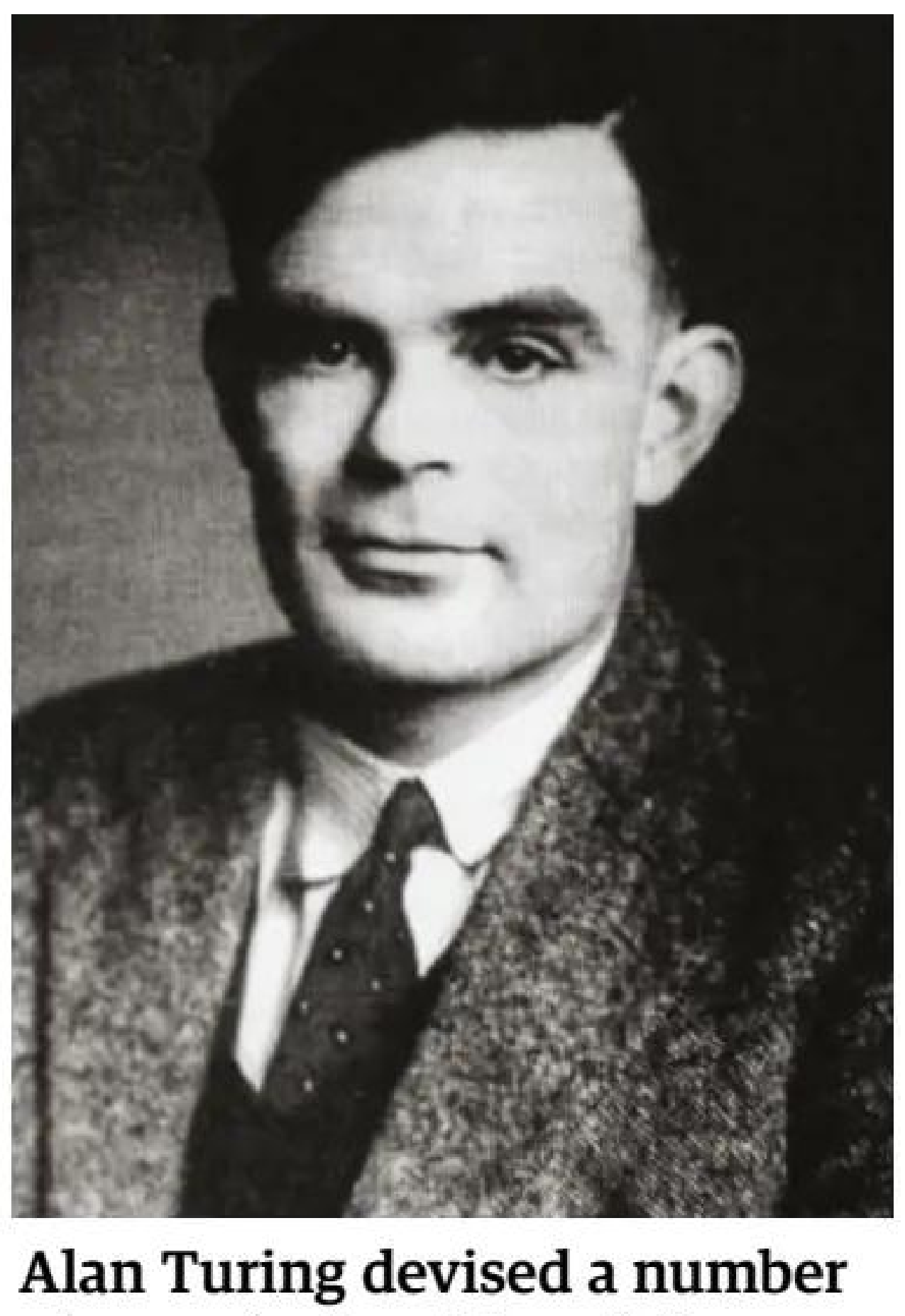
Daily boxes of high-level decrypts were sent to Churchill's office in locked boxes, the key to which he carried on his personal key ring. Only a select few in the Foreign Office and the military knew where they had come from, and not all of those shared Churchill's faith in Bletchley Park. During his visit in September 1941 he inspected the machines and huts, meeting senior codebreakers. Afterward, he gathered them outside Hut 6 for a short speech, in which he famously described them as his "geese that lay the golden egg – and never cackled." Recognising Churchill's support and respect, Bletchley sent him a letter asking for more staff. The prime minister's response was swift and decisive: "Make sure they have all they want on extreme priority and report to me that this has been done. Action this day."




A reconstruction of the Phoenix Bombe at Bletchley Park

> “Turing would often be seen riding his bicycle around the Bletchley countryside, dressed in full gas mask to avoid the pollen that set off his hay fever”

Behind this genius was a troubled man, though. The former Cambridge student could be awkward socially and was a homosexual in an age when this was not only frowned upon, but actually illegal. He proposed to a colleague at Bletchley, Joan Clarke, who accepted, but he then recanted the offer and told her of his sexual orientation. Turing became something of an all-purpose consultant for the growing operation and crossed the Atlantic in November 1942, for highest-level liaison not only on the desperate U-boat Enigma crisis, but on the electronic enciphering of speech signals between Roosevelt and Churchill. His genius and contribution to the war effort was never properly acknowledged in his lifetime, though, and in 1952 he faced criminal charges after he struck up a relationship with another man, and was placed on hormonal treatment designed to reduce libido. In 1954, at the age of 42, Turing was found dead in his home in Manchester, having apparently committed suicide by cyanide poisoning.


Alan Turing devised a number of ways for breaking ciphers

Today, Turing is rightly celebrated for his many and varied achievements, and a bust of his head sits beside an exhibition of some of his personal effects. In 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown apologised on behalf of the government and the nation for Turing’s prosecution, and publicly acknowledged the debt of gratitude owed to him by the Allies. The nation and the world’s gratitude should be directed at Turing and those he worked with, all of whom passed through Bletchley’s nondescript railway station. That station saw so much: the girl who joined the Wrens for the dashing uniform and a chance to serve at sea, who then found herself posted to a place just about as far from the sea as it was possible to get in England. The young man in the middle of his mathematics degree and a renowned chess champion, invited to put aside his studies for the duration, and the secretary, eager to ‘do her bit’, who applied for a clerical position in London but was found to be fluent in German and instead surprisingly given a train ticket to a small town called Bletchley.

They were ordinary men and women, some barely out of school, whose unique talents and skills were put to use in an extraordinary way. They all came willingly, if a little unknowingly - often via a small, anonymous house in Baker Street, where they signed the Official Secrets Act - to this seemingly insignificant Buckinghamshire town. As they stepped off those trains, they would have had no idea what amazing achievements they would become part of, even if they would never see recognition for it in their lifetime; nor could they have known the legacy they would help bestow on the nation. But come they did: first slowly, in their hundreds, then more and more as Britain faced the horrors of the Blitz, and then battles at Dunkirk and D-Day, until by 1945 there were about 10,000 people working at the Park. Bletchley is where their story begins, a story that can now be told in full and rightfully celebrated.

Bletchley’s three greatest successes

The code-breaking centre’s greatest achievements

01 Cracking Lorenz

Although the ‘Y’ Stations were intercepting the German cipher machine Lorenz messages in early-1940, they had no idea how the machine was encrypting them. John Tiltman spotted an operator’s repetition with abbreviations in August 1941 and used these small inconsistencies to crack the code. Bill Tutte used mathematical analysis to work out how the Lorenz machine worked without even seeing one and by 1942 Lorenz messages were being deciphered. Complications to the Lorenz design in 1943 led Max Newman and his team to need to design an entirely new electronic machine that would break Lorenz; the Colossus.

02 The invention of Colossus

Tommy Flowers, a brilliant GPO engineer, built Newman’s design and created the world’s first electronic semi-programmable computer in December 1943. By the end of the war, the ten Colossus machines in use were ordered to be dismantled, along with all records but only six were. It had taken weeks to break Lorenz with mathematical calculations: Colossus could do this in hours, reading the paper tape at 5,000 characters a second and sending the tape travelling in the wheels at 48 kilometres (30 miles) per hour.

03 D-Day

Without Bletchley, D-Day may well have had a different outcome. In June 1944, Colossus helped to fool German High Command of Allied plans. As well as providing information on German positions, the breaking of ciphers sent by the German Secret Intelligence Service allowed the Allies to confuse Hitler over where they would land; Hitler decided to divert his troops away from the very beaches the Allies had chosen in Normandy. Bletchley was able to read messages between Garbo (a network of 27 fictitious spies) and the Abwehr, showing Hitler had fallen for the deception.

© Alamy, Getty, Edward Crooks.

Japan's First Strike

Imperial planning and preparation for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor began months before the Sunday morning aerial assault

“The rise or fall of the empire depends on this battle. Everyone will do his duty to the utmost”

– Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet

© Piotr Forkasiewicz

Just before sunrise on Sunday 7th December 1941, six aircraft carriers of the Imperial Japanese Navy's First Air Fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, turned into the wind, ready to launch a striking force of 353 aircraft.

Nagumo's flagship, Akagi, and her consorts, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku and Zuikaku, set in motion the marauding strike force that would plunge the Pacific into World War II. Its target was the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, which was anchored at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu in the territory of Hawaii. Other US Navy and Army installations on the island, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Bellows Field, Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, and the naval air stations at Kaneohe and on Ford Island in the heart of Pearl Harbor were to be hit as well.

The opening blow was intended to cripple the American military presence in the Pacific; allow the Japanese armed forces to seize and consolidate strategic gains throughout the region; and bring the US government to the negotiating table where Japan would dictate favourable terms of an armistice. To that end, the Pearl Harbor raid was co-ordinated with attacks on the Philippines, Wake Island, Midway Atoll and Malaya.

The gambit was all or nothing for Japan. Although senior Japanese commanders were confident of swift victory, at least some of them acknowledged that a prolonged war with the United States was a daunting prospect, considering the industrial might and resources at the disposal of their adversary. Years of rising militarism and imperialism in Japan had placed the island nation on a collision course with the United States, a preeminent power in the Pacific since the Spanish-American War. Japan's provocative military moves on the Asian mainland, particularly the occupation of the Chinese region of Manchuria and later of French Indochina, had brought the two nations to loggerheads. While negotiations were continuing, most observers on either side of the Pacific believed war was inevitable.

The British influence

At 9pm on the evening prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, Nagumo ordered all hands aboard the Akagi to attention. He solemnly read a message from Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet. “The rise or fall of the empire depends on this battle. Everyone will do his duty to the utmost.”

Yamamoto meant the communication not only as an encouragement to the Japanese sailors and airmen, but also as homage to naval esprit de corps. During the decades preceding World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy had embarked on a lengthy program of expansion, modernising and modelling itself on the finest naval tradition in the world – the British Royal Navy. The message from Yamamoto echoed one similarly

> "Bolstered by the British success, the staff of the Combined Fleet began with renewed purpose in January 1941, to plan for just such a bold stroke"

flashed by Admiral Horatio Nelson, one of the greatest heroes in the history of the Royal Navy, prior to the epic battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Japanese respect for the Royal Navy ran deep. Since the turn of the 20th century, some vessels of the imperial fleet had been constructed in British and French shipyards, while Japanese training, operational standards, uniforms and rank insignia were similar to those of the British.

Following the outbreak of war in Europe, the Royal Navy again served as a role model for the Japanese. On the night of 11th November 1940, Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers of the Fleet Air Arm flew from the deck of the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious in the Mediterranean Sea and attacked the Italian naval anchorage at Taranto. The 21 obsolescent British biplanes sank one Italian battleship and damaged two others.

For the Japanese, the idea of a preemptive raid on Pearl Harbor had been discussed, tested during war games and shelved several times during the years between the world wars. However, bolstered by the British success, the staff of the Combined Fleet began, with renewed purpose in January 1941, to plan for just such a bold stroke.

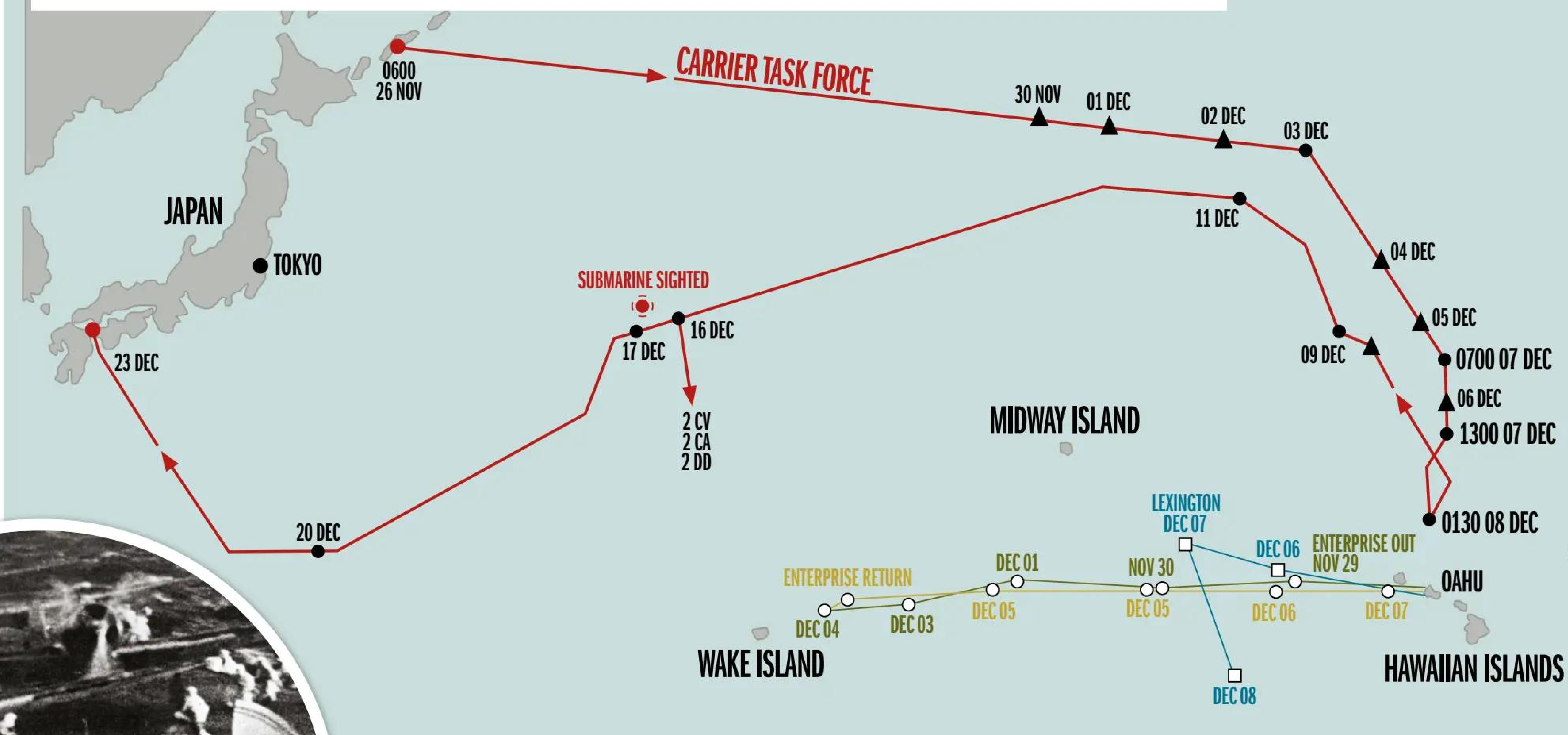
Lieutenant Commander Minoru Genda, one of the best-known and most respected aviators in the Japanese armed forces, had observed American carriers operating in a unified, single strike force and attended war games in 1936, during which an offensive scenario against Pearl Harbor had ended in simulated disaster for the attacker. Still, Genda remained one of a relative few Japanese officers who believed it was possible for a carrier task force to successfully deliver a stunning blow against an enemy fleet at anchor.

As Japanese aircraft carrier strength reached sufficient levels to support a Pearl Harbor attack, Yamamoto instructed Admiral Takajiro Onishi, chief of staff of the Eleventh Air Fleet, to order Genda to evaluate the potential for success with, "…special attention to the feasibility of the operation, method of execution and the forces to be used." Yamamoto was reluctant to go to war with the US, however, he strongly believed that a substantial and successful first strike at the

Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo led the First Air Fleet during the Pearl Harbor operation, but later lost his command

Japanese raider route

The six Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers and their escorting ships of the First Air Fleet departed the friendly waters of the Kuril Islands on 26 November 1941, sailing a northern route well away from standard merchant shipping lanes and maintaining strict radio silence. Rough seas and intermittent heavy rain cloaked the warships at times as they turned south east towards a point 370 kilometres north of Oahu to launch the aerial strike force that devastated Pearl Harbor on 7th December.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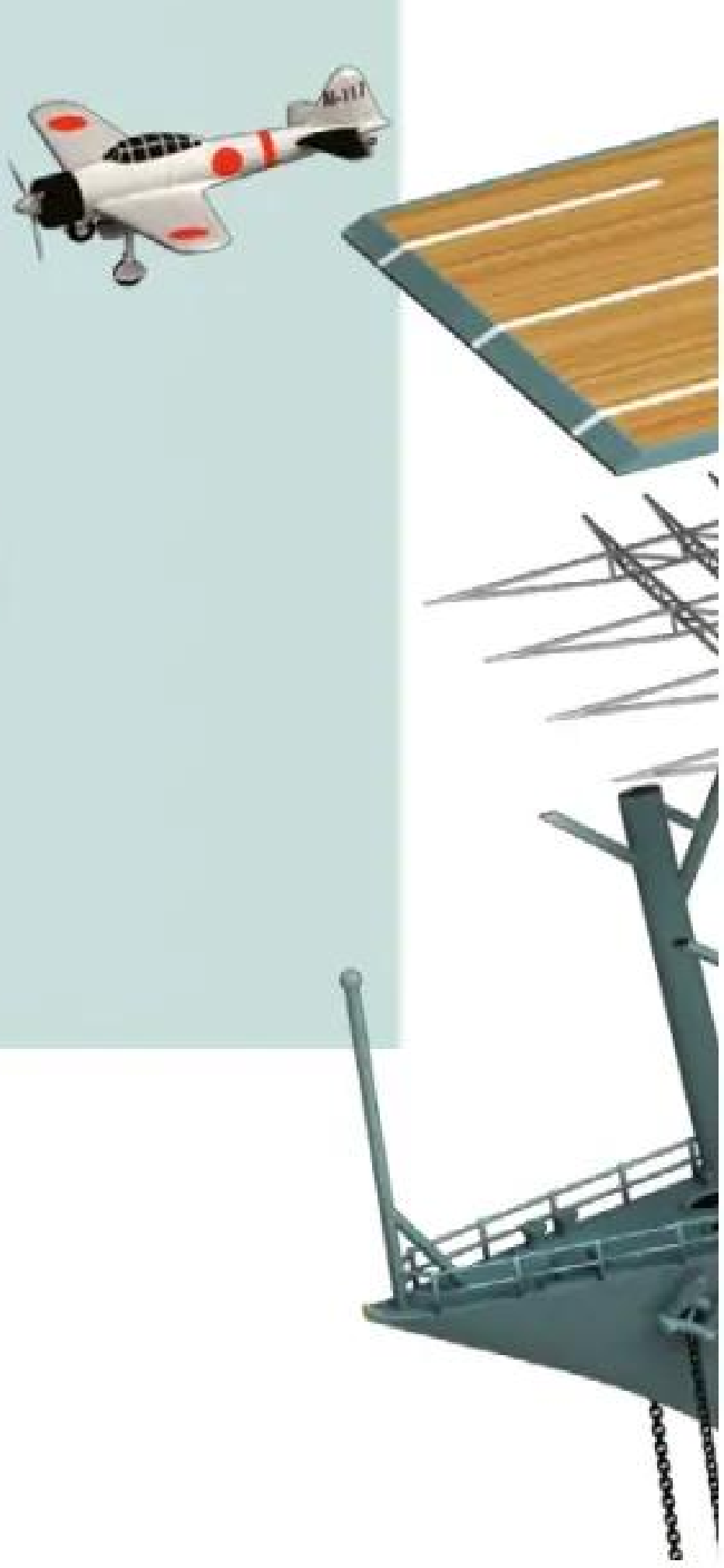
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Left: Japanese aircraft prepare to take off from the carrier Shokaku during the second attack wave



Imperial war machines

The Japanese armed forces employed the latest technology available during the opening phase of World War II in the Pacific

Mitsubishi A6M Zero Fighter

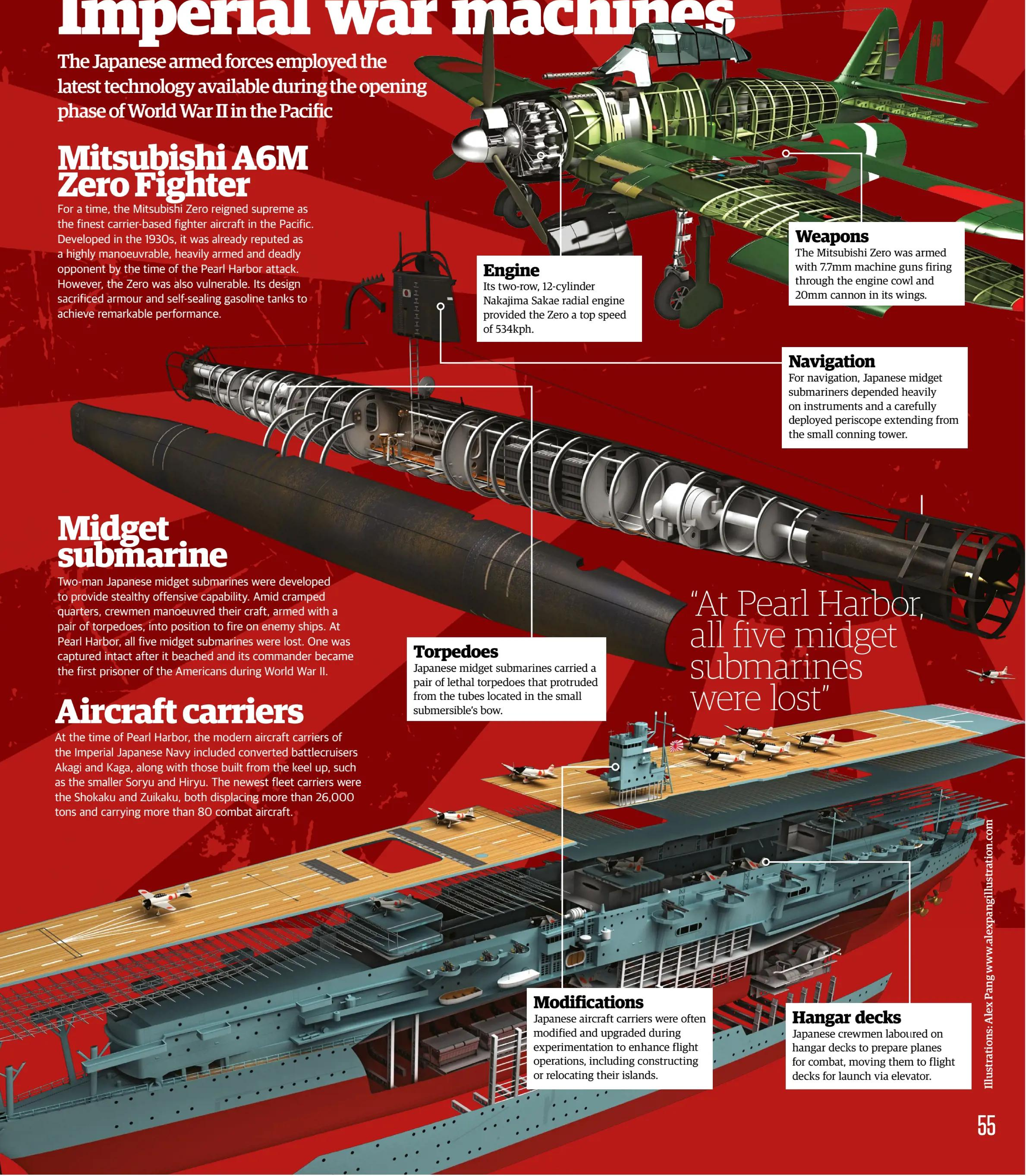
For a time, the Mitsubishi Zero reigned supreme as the finest carrier-based fighter aircraft in the Pacific. Developed in the 1930s, it was already reputed as a highly manoeuvrable, heavily armed and deadly opponent by the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. However, the Zero was also vulnerable. Its design sacrificed armour and self-sealing gasoline tanks to achieve remarkable performance.

Midget submarine

Two-man Japanese midget submarines were developed to provide stealthy offensive capability. Amid cramped quarters, crewmen manoeuvred their craft, armed with a pair of torpedoes, into position to fire on enemy ships. At Pearl Harbor, all five midget submarines were lost. One was captured intact after it beached and its commander became the first prisoner of the Americans during World War II.

Aircraft carriers

At the time of Pearl Harbor, the modern aircraft carriers of the Imperial Japanese Navy included converted battlecruisers Akagi and Kaga, along with those built from the keel up, such as the smaller Soryu and Hiryu. The newest fleet carriers were the Shokaku and Zuikaku, both displacing more than 26,000 tons and carrying more than 80 combat aircraft.



Engine
Its two-row, 12-cylinder Nakajima Sakae radial engine provided the Zero a top speed of 534kph.

Weapons
The Mitsubishi Zero was armed with 7.7mm machine guns firing through the engine cowl and 20mm cannon in its wings.

Navigation
For navigation, Japanese midget submariners depended heavily on instruments and a carefully deployed periscope extending from the small conning tower.

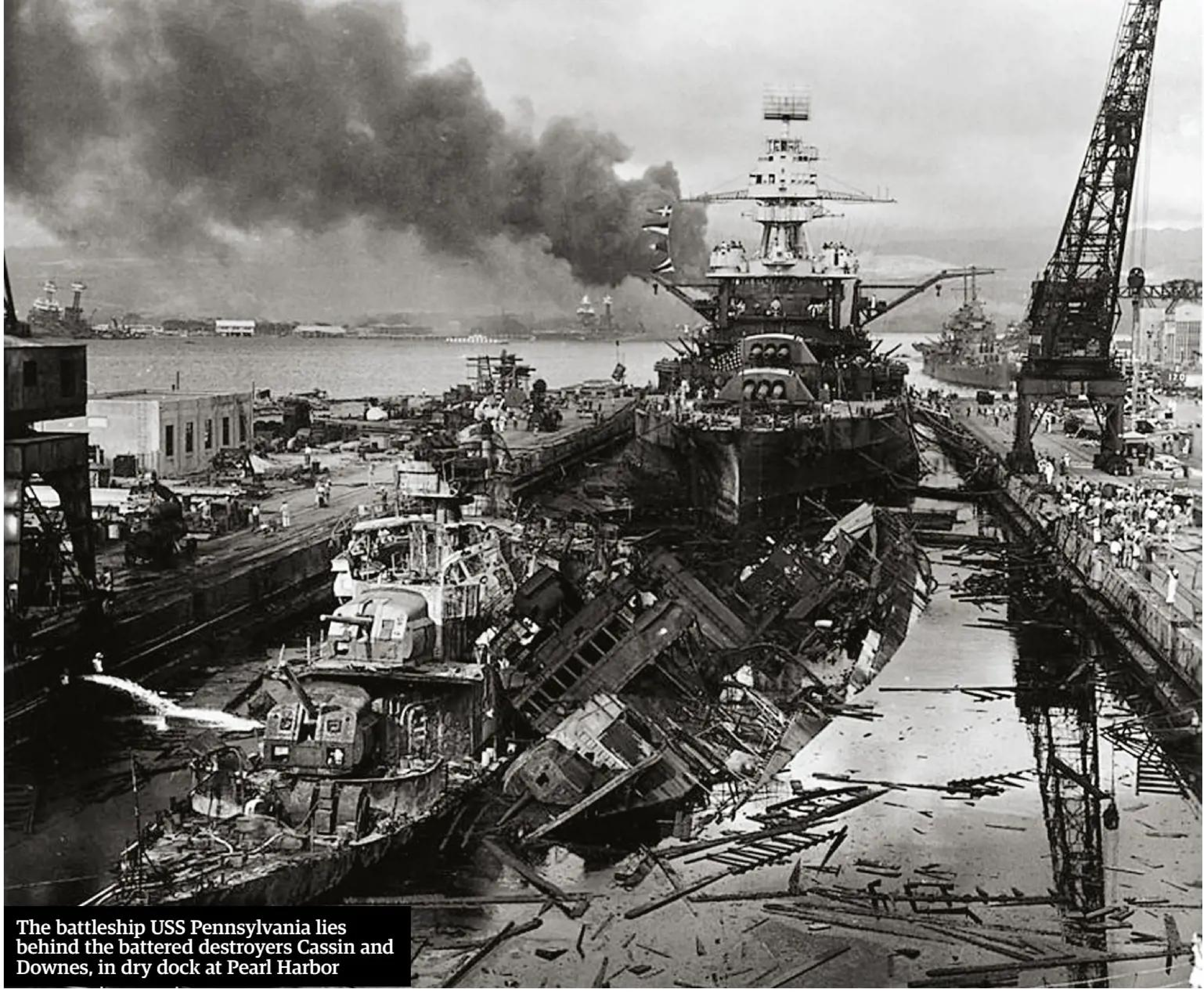
Torpedoes
Japanese midget submarines carried a pair of lethal torpedoes that protruded from the tubes located in the small submersible's bow.

> "At Pearl Harbor, all five midget submarines were lost"

Modifications
Japanese aircraft carriers were often modified and upgraded during experimentation to enhance flight operations, including constructing or relocating their islands.

Hangar decks
Japanese crewmen laboured on hangar decks to prepare planes for combat, moving them to flight decks for launch via elevator.

Illustrations: Alex Pang www.alexpangillustration.com



The battleship USS Pennsylvania lies behind the battered destroyers Cassin and Downes, in dry dock at Pearl Harbor

Pacific Fleet was the only option to bring such a conflict to a fast, favourable conclusion for Japan.

Yamamoto's assertion that Pearl Harbor should be Japan's target actually reversed traditional thinking at the highest command levels within the Imperial Navy. Although the army had been active on the Asian continent, naval doctrine had previously assumed a defensive posture. In the autumn of 1940, Yamamoto's assertion became an ultimatum. He eventually threatened to resign if senior commanders within the Combined Fleet refused to support the proposal.

The blueprints for war

By the following August, the basic plan for the Pearl Harbor attack had been approved. The six aircraft carriers of the First Air Fleet were to be accompanied by an armada of two battleships, two heavy cruisers, a light cruiser, nine destroyers, three submarines and eight tankers - a total of 31 vessels - sailing from their rendezvous point at Hitokappu Bay in the Kuril Islands. The fleet was to sail on 26th November; take a northerly course, in order to avoid the

Naval air juggernaut

The Imperial Japanese Navy observed Western advances in naval aviation and welcomed military envoys to consult and train its pilots

The British Royal Navy pioneered many aspects of the development of naval aviation in the early 20th century and Japanese naval observers also recognised its potential.

Intent on emulating the Royal Navy's successes, the Japanese received a British mission headed by Captain William Sempill in the autumn of 1921. Sempill led 29 air operations instructors charged with assisting the development of the Japanese naval aviation program. By 1922, the Japanese had also constructed the Hosho, the world's first aircraft carrier that had been purpose-built, rather than converted from another ship type as others before it had been.

Sempill, who was later exposed as a spy for the Japanese, hoped to secure substantial sales of British arms to Japan in exchange for valuable expertise and advice. His team brought the blueprints of the most advanced British carrier designs, protocols involving elements such as pilot training; the launch and recovery of aircraft; refuelling and maintenance; and airborne operations. The British trained the young Japanese pilots in the latest Royal Navy aircraft, such as the Gloster Sparrowhawk fighter, along with torpedo bombers and dive bombers. They introduced torpedo tactics to the Imperial Navy as well.

Japanese engineers and designers experimented with their own ordnance and aircraft, several of which were patterned after British types, and perfected carrier operations and doctrine during the 1920s and 1930s.

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Commander Takeshi Naito, a naval attaché in Berlin, travelled to the port of Taranto, Italy, where the British had executed a successful attack against the Italian Fleet at anchor in November 1940. With the assistance of the Italian Navy, Naito assessed the dynamics of the Taranto raid and advised the Pearl Harbor planners on modifications to existing tactics. Eventually, wooden stabilising fins were attached to Japanese aerial torpedoes, allowing them to run true in Pearl Harbor's shallow waters.

Dive bombers crowd a flight deck prior to Pearl Harbor

Below: Type 91 Kai 2 torpedoes on the flight deck of the Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carrier, Akagi. The carrier is at Hitokappu Bay in the Kurils just prior to departing for the attack on Pearl Harbor

> "Sempill, who was later exposed as a spy for the Japanese, hoped to secure substantial sales of British arms to Japan"

busy Pacific trade routes and merchant shipping that plied the ocean; maintain strict radio silence; and launch its aircraft in two waves from a position 370 kilometres north of Oahu. The tentative date for the attack was designated as 7th December 1941. A cordon of fleet submarines was positioned around Oahu to provide early warning of American ship movements and attack any US Navy vessels that might be at sea near the harbour. Five midget submarines were to be launched from their mother submarines hours before the aerial attack, with the hope that they might infiltrate Pearl Harbor and launch torpedoes at anchored vessels of the Pacific Fleet. Almost everything was considered in detail.

Early in September, senior Japanese officers convened at the Naval War College in Tokyo and finalised the plans for the attack. One month later, senior pilots were informed of their target. They already had some idea of its nature, since the torpedo groups had worked to perfect their runs against capital ships anchored in shallow waters: they knew it'd be an enemy port.

Combined Fleet Top Secret Operational Order No 1 was issued on 5th November, followed 48 hours later by Order No 2, authorising the fleet to weigh anchor at the end of the month and to execute the attack on Pearl Harbor.

When the fleet set sail, Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu were in Washington, DC, conducting last-ditch negotiations with Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Franklin D Roosevelt. These negotiations were expected to fail, and when the impasse was reached, specific orders to launch the attack would be issued to Nagumo at sea. At the same time, the envoys, oblivious to the details of the Pearl Harbor attack, were instructed to deliver a message to the US government, officially terminating the negotiations. The government in Tokyo considered this diplomatic step essentially a declaration of war, timed for a half hour before the Japanese aircraft appeared in the sky above Pearl Harbor.

Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, leader of the air groups of the First Air Fleet, was assigned the task of allocating aircraft to specific targets, organising the two waves of planes to co-ordinate their attacks and allotting fighter protection against any defending American planes that might make it into the sky to give battle. Fuchida assigned 185 aircraft to the first wave. It consisted of 49 Nakajima B5N 'Kate' bombers carrying armour-piercing bombs, 40

> "While the Kates hit the warships anchored in Pearl Harbor, 25 Vals were designated to blast the primary American fighter base at Wheeler Field"

The battleship USS Arizona belches black smoke as its superstructure buckles after a devastating explosion during the Pearl Harbor attack

A day of infamy

Despite the success of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Admiral Yamamoto correctly surmised that it was incomplete

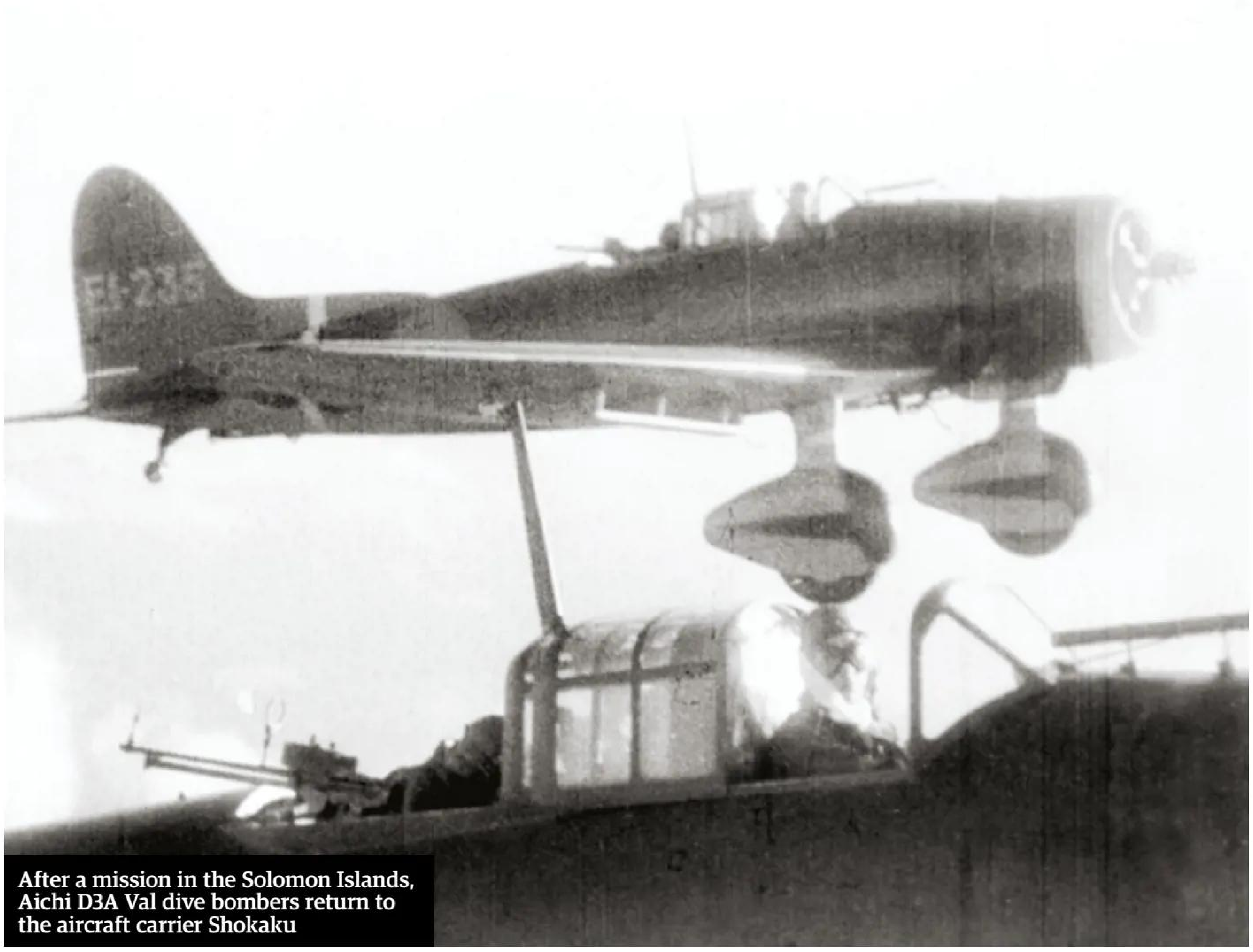
As soon as Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida was back aboard the Akagi, the leader of the Pearl Harbor strike reported to Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo on the carrier's bridge. Fuchida is said to have begged his commander to let the troops launch another attack.

Nagumo declined. The risk was too great and so he ordered the First Air Fleet to retire. When news of the successful attack reached Tokyo, citizens took to the streets in celebration. The highest echelons of the military exuded optimism.

However, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, architect of the raid, brooded. The American carriers had not been destroyed. Retribution would soon come. He had once warned fellow officers, "If I am told to fight regardless of the consequences, I shall run wild for the first six months or a year but I have utterly no confidence for the second or third year."

Pearl Harbor had been a tremendous tactical victory. The US Pacific Fleet was crippled but Yamamoto's words proved prophetic. Machine shops, repair facilities and stockpiles of fuel and oil were untouched. The submarine base was operational. The Americans recovered rapidly and just six months after Pearl Harbor, four of the Japanese carriers that had executed the raid were sunk by American planes at the Battle of Midway.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto envisioned a bleak future for the Japanese nation in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack



After a mission in the Solomon Islands, Aichi D3A Val dive bombers return to the aircraft carrier Shokaku

Kates with aerial torpedoes, 51 Aichi D3A 'Val' dive bombers with general purpose bombs and 45 superb Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters to provide escort and strafe targets of opportunity.

While the Kates hit the warships anchored in Pearl Harbor, 25 Vals were designated to blast the primary American fighter base at Wheeler Field. 17 Vals were assigned to destroy Ford Island's patrol plane and fighter base and nine were to strike American bombers based at Hickam Field. The second wave included 54 Kates armed with 550 and 125-pound bombs to demolish installations and crater runways at the airfields, 80 Vals with 550-pound bombs to renew the attacks on the warships in the harbour and 36 marauding Zeroes.

Fuchida received an intelligence message from a Japanese spy on Oahu the day before the attack was launched. It was tinged both with optimism that the element of surprise would be achieved and disappointment that the three American aircraft carriers, Enterprise, Lexington and Saratoga, were not present at the anchorage. It read, "No balloons, no torpedo defence nets deployed around battleships in Pearl Harbor. All battleships are in. No indications from enemy radio activity that ocean patrol flights being made in Hawaiian area. Lexington left harbour yesterday. Enterprise also thought to be operating at sea."

The Saratoga was steaming into the harbour at San Diego, California when the Japanese attackers arrived above Pearl Harbor on 7th December. Although the aircraft carriers were absent, there was no turning back. The attack had to proceed as ordered and the Japanese rationalised that the remaining targets, particularly the US battleships, were high value enough to justify the risk being undertaken.

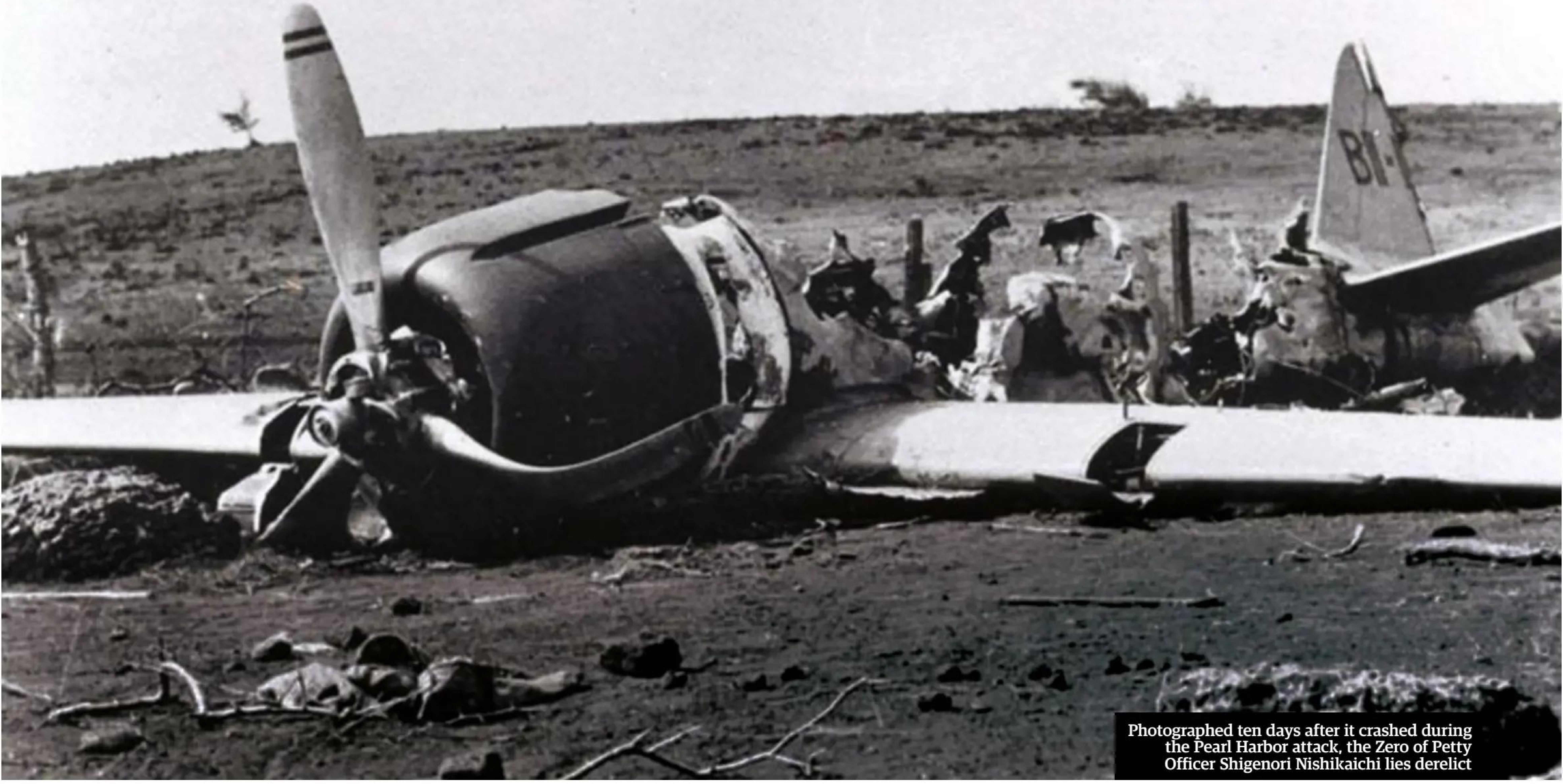
"Tora! Tora! Tora!"

As the sky was still dark over the deck of the Akagi, pitched in rough seas, a green lamp was waved in a circle and the first Zero fighter roared down the flight deck into the air. Within 15 minutes, the entire first wave was airborne. At 7.40am, the north shore of Oahu came into view. Fuchida was exultant. He radioed "Tora! Tora! Tora!" to the anxious Nagumo, signifying that complete surprise had been achieved. For several hours, the attackers wrought devastation on their targets below.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Japanese forces moved aggressively in concert with the Pearl Harbor attack, reaching for objectives that would minimise US interference with coming operations to seize the Dutch East Indies, secure vital resources such as oil and rubber for their war machine and extend their defensive perimeter further into the expanse of the world's greatest ocean.

As the attack got underway in Hawaii, word was flashed to Midway Atoll at 6.30am local time on 7th December. The Marine garrison went on high alert and by dusk, the Japanese had arrived. Two Imperial Navy destroyers, the Akebono and Ushio, were sighted as they prepared to shell the installations on Midway.

War came to the atoll at 9.35pm, as Japanese 13-centimetre shells crashed on Sand and Eastern Islands, the two spits of land that, within months, would become the epicentre of World War II in



Photographed ten days after it crashed during the Pearl Harbor attack, the Zero of Petty Officer Shigenori Nishikaichi lies derelict

the Pacific. As the destroyers cruised back and forth, the Marine guns responded with seven and 13-centimetre rounds. Japanese shells set the large seaplane hangar ablaze. One enemy round scored a direct hit on the concrete structure that housed the Sand Island powerplant, smashing through an air intake and mortally wounding a young Marine officer, 1st Lieutenant George H Cannon, who refused to leave his post for medical treatment and later received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

The Midway battle lasted for about half an hour and Marine gunners claimed to have scored hits on at least one enemy destroyer, which was seen belching smoke and flame. When the Japanese finally withdrew, four Americans were dead and 10 wounded. 36 Japanese bombers hit Wake Island on the morning of 8th December (across the International Date Line), destroying a dozen Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters on the ground. Meanwhile, Japanese troops landed at Kota Bharu on the coast of Malaya while the Pearl Harbor attack force was in the air. Within hours of the strike against Pearl, Japanese bombers hit Clark Field and other installations in the Philippines, catching American planes on the ground again.

Shocked and bloodied, the United States was suddenly at war. For a time, Japanese domination of the Pacific was virtually uncontested, but just as Yamamoto feared, a protracted conflict emerged. Even as Allied forces turned the tide and fought their way inexorably to Tokyo Bay and victory in 1945, the spectre of Pearl Harbor still continued to haunt the Americans in the same way as Stalingrad haunted the Russians.

While conspiracy theories have surfaced in the three-quarters of a century since the 'Day of Infamy', these remain the topic of heated debate. Some revisionist historians have reviewed all the proof they need to conclude that President Roosevelt and other high-ranking Allied civilian leaders and military officers - even British Prime Minister Winston Churchill - were aware that the attacks on Pearl Harbor and other locations were coming. However, the 'case' will probably never be closed. On the tactical level, the Americans received several warnings of the Japanese air armada approaching Pearl Harbor on 7th December 1941 - an encounter with a midget submarine and a radar sighting at Opana above Kahuku Point on the north shore. A question remains whether US commanders should have taken action to improve preparedness and should have been more responsive to the signs of imminent attack on that fateful Sunday morning.

A Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter roars off the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Akagi en route to Pearl Harbor

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Their Finest Hour

As Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany, young fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force defeated the vaunted Luftwaffe in the pivotal Battle of Britain

The Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries was swift and decisive. In a matter of weeks, the British Expeditionary Force had been ejected from the European continent at Dunkirk and Adolf Hitler stood on the brink of total victory in World War II.

Roosevelt sought to rectify these problems with a range of domestic programs called the New Deal. It focused on what were known as the 'three Rs', relief, recovery and reform. Relief was the immediate action that was taken to halt further economic failure. Recovery saw temporary programs implemented to restart consumer spending and reform saw more permanent programmes put in place to avoid another crash and safeguard savings. With these actions the American people began to see hope in the new Democratic Party. The Republicans under Hoover had said the worst was over and only hard work and determination would see the United States through, but these had actually turned out to be either lies or woeful predictions.

One significant challenge remained in the West, however. As German troops paraded down the Champs Elysées in Paris, Hitler and his generals contemplated the invasion of Great Britain, the island nation that now stood alone against the Nazi juggernaut in the summer of 1940. For Britain, the situation was grave.

On 18th June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons with a warning that the Battle of France was over and the Battle of Britain was about to begin. "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties," he intoned, "and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

German troops and tanks were poised along the coastline of France. Officers gazed across the English Channel at the white cliffs of Dover, a scant 20 miles distant. Hitler and his senior commanders knew that the invasion and conquest of Great Britain would be their sternest challenge to date. However, they were brimming with confidence as they planned Operation Sea Lion, marshalling barges from Germany and across occupied Europe to ferry combat troops to Britain's shores and considering the prospects for holding the might of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force at bay.

One fact was plain. Soldiers could not cross the Channel without the threat of air attack and Britain's naval might could not be restrained until the Luftwaffe owned the skies over land and sea. Control of the air was a prerequisite to any successful invasion, and Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, assured Hitler that his fighters and bombers would sweep the RAF aside within a few weeks.

Göring gathered more than 1,200 Messerschmitt Me-109 and twin-engine Me-110 fighters and 1,300 bombers for the air assault. The nimble Me-109 was heavily armed and fast; however, fuel consumption as German squadrons flew from bases located from Norway to the Cotentin Peninsula restricted actual time over Britain and the Channel to only about 20 minutes during a typical sortie. The Luftwaffe bombers included a mixed bag of Heinkel He-111, Dornier Do-17, and Junkers Ju-88 aircraft capable of carrying only relatively light bomb loads. The Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber, a terror weapon that had been effective as flying artillery during the German Army's blitzkrieg across Europe, was quickly proven unsuited for a sustained bombing campaign. So many of the lumbering Stukas were lost to Royal Air Force fighters that the planes were quickly withdrawn from combat.

Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory led the Big Wing faction of the RAF and later commanded Allied air forces during the 1944 Normandy invasion

Opposing the vaunted Luftwaffe, the RAF mustered roughly 700 frontline Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighters along with other somewhat obsolescent types under the control of RAF Fighter Command led by Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding. The Hurricane was slower than the Spitfire, so a cooperative tactic effectively emerged. While the Hurricanes primarily targeted the bomber formations, the sleek, powerful Spitfires matched up with the Me-109s in epic dogfights that have come to symbolize the desperation, heroism, and sacrifice of the RAF during the Battle of Britain.

Defending air and island

As the threat of invasion loomed, British air defence preparations were admirable. Fighter Command was divided into four defensive sectors, and group headquarters were established to dispense real-time intelligence as Luftwaffe air raids materialized. Headquartered at Uxbridge, Middlesex, No. 11 Group defended London and southeastern England and bore the brunt of the Nazi air onslaught. Number 12 Group at Watnall, Nottinghamshire, defended Wales and the Midlands, while No. 10 Group covered southwestern England and No. 13 Group was

Timeline

1940

- **Miracle at Dunkirk** The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, the bulk of British troops on the continent of Europe, and other Allied soldiers is completed at the port of Dunkirk. **4th June, 1940**
- **The Battle begins** The first engagements of the Battle of Britain occur as Luftwaffe planes attack shipping in the English Channel and draw RAF fighters into the air. **10th July, 1940**
- **The Greatest Day** RAF fighters claim 75 German planes and lose 30 to enemy fighters while defending against heavy bombing raids on their precious airfields. **15th August, 1940**
- **Bringing bomber pilots** RAF Fighter Command calls for Bomber Command pilots to transfer in order to make good the losses sustained thus far in heavy air combat. **17th August, 1940**
- **The Hardest Day** Called Black Thursday by the Germans, both sides lose heavily during continuous air battles. Losses among Stuka dive bombers are so severe that the planes are withdrawn from combat. **18th August, 1940**
- **Errant bombing** Apparently off course, Luftwaffe bombers drop their deadly cargoes on London, hitting the centre of the city, residential areas, factories, and the docks of the East End. **24th August, 1940**

Defining moment

Der Adlertag

13th August, 1940

On Eagle Day, the Luftwaffe stages large-scale raids against targets in England, including radar stations and airfields. RAF fighters shoot down 46 German planes.

Rivalry in the skies

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding is rightly given the lion's share of credit for the RAF victory in the Battle of Britain. However, for Dowding it came at personal cost. In the midst of the fighting, a difference in tactical perspective emerged within the highest echelons of the RAF. Dowding pursued a Fabian strategy, avoiding major air battles that might cripple Fighter Command beyond repair. Meanwhile, another RAF faction, the Big Wing advocates, championed large, set-piece encounters with the Luftwaffe. While Dowding was supported by Air Vice Marshal Keith Park of No. 11 Group, their opponents were powerful, including Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory of No. 12 Group. The debate rages, but on 24th November, leadership of Fighter Command passed to Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sholto Douglas, a Big Wing supporter.

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, who won the battle but lost the command due to tactical disagreements

charged with the defence of Scotland and northern England.

As the Battle of Britain developed, the RAF came to fully appreciate the value of a new early warning device called radar. A system of radar posts called Chain Home effectively eliminated any hope the Germans had in the element of surprise. Even while under direct Luftwaffe attack, the most sophisticated radar network in the world continued to function.

The battle joined

Hitler shared Reich Marshal Göring's optimism for an easy aerial victory and issued Directive No. 16 tentatively scheduling Operation Sea Lion for 15th August, 1940, just over a month after the effort to eradicate the RAF was undertaken. The Germans referred to the opening phase of the Battle of Britain as Kanalkampf, or the Channel Battle. The earliest targets of the Luftwaffe air offensive were shipping and barge traffic in the English Channel, port facilities at Dover and other harbours on the southeastern coast of England, and aircraft manufacturing facilities.

Marauding German bombers sank numerous British merchant ships during more than a month of Kanalkampf raids, and the Royal Navy relocated most of its ships and personnel westward from Dover to Portsmouth. On 25th July, Stukas ravaged a convoy transporting coal. When RAF fighters intervened, the Germans lost 16 aircraft and the British seven. Two weeks later, German bombers sank four ships and damaged six others in a 20-ship convoy. RAF fighters shot down 31 German planes but lost 19 of their own.

At first, the Admiralty directed that all convoys embark only at night, but subsequently the decision was made to discontinue Channel convoys and transport cargo by rail as much as possible. Still, despite pitched dogfights and daily encounters, the Luftwaffe failed to sufficiently erode the defensive strength of the RAF.

Der adlertag

Round two of the preparation for the invasion of England was postponed several times due to poor flying weather. Finally, 13th August, 1940, was designated as Der Adlertag, or Eagle Day. The objective of the renewed Luftwaffe offensive was the destruction of RAF Fighter Command during days of unrelenting air combat. Still confident of victory, Luftwaffe pilots often sang a jaunty tune with the lyric, "Wir fliegen gegen England," or "We are flying against England."

Defining moment

"To so few"

20th August, 1940

Prime Minister Winston Churchill tells the House of Commons, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

Although the Germans were aware that Chain Home radar stations provided the RAF, particularly Air Vice Marshal Keith Park's No. 11 Group, with some measure of early warning, they never fully grasped the significance of the network in RAF fighter deployment and readiness to defend against air raids. Hitting the radar stations was, however, an initial component of Adlertag and the following two weeks.

The continuing effort to bring the RAF to its knees included the systematic bombing of its airfields scattered across southern and central England, the destruction of the 300-foot towers and installations of the Chain Home radar network, and the elimination of the planes and pilots of Fighter Command once and for all.

During Adlertag three radar stations were hit by Luftwaffe bombers, knocking them off the air for only six hours as a lack of planned follow-up attacks allowed Chain Home to recover. Airfields in the south were attacked. On Adlertag the

1940

RAF retaliates
In response to the Luftwaffe bombing of London, 40 RAF bombers attack Berlin, the Nazi capital, causing Hitler to change tactics during the Battle of Britain.
25th August, 1940

Debden Airfield hit
Hit by at least 100 German bombs, RAF Debden, located in Essex northeast of London, endures its third Luftwaffe air raid.
31st August, 1940

The Blitz begins
The Luftwaffe sends 400 bombers escorted by 600 fighters to attack the docks of London's East End. Raids occur around the clock, and later the Luftwaffe switches to nocturnal attacks.
7th September, 1940

Sea Lion denied
Aware that the Luftwaffe cannot achieve air superiority over Britain, the RAF, and the English Channel, Hitler postpones and eventually cancels Operation Sea Lion, the proposed invasion of the British Isles.
17th September, 1940

Last great gasp
Three coordinated Luftwaffe air raids hit London, Portsmouth, and other targets in the last large-scale attacks of the Battle of Britain, although the Blitz continues against British cities.
29th October, 1940

Final victory
Generally accepted as the end of the Battle of Britain, air operations are hampered by bad weather, and Luftwaffe attacks are no longer daily events.
31st October, 1940

Germans lost 46 planes and the RAF just 13. However, days of intense aerial combat followed.

Air battles intensified

By 15-16th August, the air battles above England had reached fever pitch. The number of combined combatant sorties neared 2,700. Scores of RAF and Luftwaffe planes were seen tangled in the skies. On the 15th, later known as "The Greatest Day," RAF pilots destroyed 75 German planes and lost 30 of their own.

18th August, known to the British as "The Hardest Day" and to the Germans as "Black Thursday," left RAF commanders deeply concerned with the staying power of their planes and pilots while Hitler's confidence in his aerial might was shaken. The Luftwaffe lost 69 planes, the RAF 68. Raids on British airfields continued with telling effect. At RAF Kenley in Surrey, all 10 hangars were demolished. A dozen planes, including 10 precious Hurricanes, were destroyed, and bombs cratered runways.

In 10 days of aerial combat from 8-18th August, the RAF lost 175 planes, while Luftwaffe losses reached a staggering 332 aircraft. Although its losses were only about half those of the Luftwaffe, the RAF was strained to breaking point. Some replacement pilots were procured from Bomber Command, and the pace of new fighter production peaked.

On 20th August, at the height of the great air battle, Churchill rose once again in the House of Commons. He offered, "The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Reprieve and resurgence

The prime minister's stirring words touched the people of Britain, the fighting pilots of the RAF who came to be known as "The Few," and the free world. Still, the issue remained in doubt. By the end of the month, six out of seven main RAF bases in southeastern England had been severely damaged. Nevertheless, the RAF had given Hitler pause. On 3rd September, Operation Sea Lion, already postponed once, was delayed another three weeks. While Luftwaffe daylight raids against RAF installations and manufacturing facilities continued, Göring also directed nocturnal attacks against military targets across Britain. However, major cities were not targeted due to the certainty of RAF retaliation against German population centers. On the night of 24th August, a few Luftwaffe bombers drifted off course, dropping their bombs on London. The following night, RAF bombers hit Berlin.

Hitler flew into a rage and directed a new strategy, terror bombing to break the fighting spirit of the British people. On 7th September, German bombers appeared over London in strength. More than 2,000 civilians were killed or wounded. For 57 consecutive nights, the British capital was ravaged.

The Luftwaffe's refocus on British cities did not fully suspend daylight operations. However, Fighter Command was given the opportunity to rest and refit. Then, the turning point in the struggle for air superiority occurred. Two massive raids were launched against targets in Britain on 15th September. The RAF put 300 fighters into the air and shot down 80 enemy planes. The Luftwaffe could not sustain such losses; the number and size of further raids were curtailed. 15th September is still commemorated annually as "Battle of Britain Day."

The catastrophe prompted Hitler to cancel Operation Sea Lion indefinitely two days later. He then ordered the barges and other naval craft assembled for the cross-Channel invasion to disperse. By mid-October, it was clear that the Royal Air Force had won the Battle of Britain.

Casualties during four months of aerial combat included nearly 1,600 RAF airmen killed and over 400 wounded with 1,744 planes lost. The Luftwaffe suffered 2,600 dead, 735 wounded, and more than 900 taken prisoner. Nearly 2,000 German planes were destroyed.

Defining moment
Battle of Britain Day
15th September, 1940
Heavy Luftwaffe raids target London, but RAF fighters shoot down 80 enemy aircraft, wresting the initiative from the Germans during the Battle of Britain

Appalling postscript

Although the Nazi war machine had been slowed in the skies over England, the Luftwaffe continued its terror bombing campaign for months. London was not the only city to suffer the wrath of Hitler and the Luftwaffe. On 14th November, 1940, Coventry was assailed by 400 bombers, killing 568 people and injuring another 1,200. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and others were subjected to intense air raids. The Blitz, as it came to be known, lasted for months, until May 1941.

By then, Hitler had already concluded that Britain would never buckle under an aerial assault. British cities had burned and crumbled, but the RAF remained resolute. The Führer turned away from the West. Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, was only weeks away. The Battle of Britain was won, but others were just beginning.

The bloodiest battle in history

The outcome of WWII and the fate of the Third Reich was decided in the bloodied ruins of Stalingrad

The pivotal battle of World War II was fought in the Soviet city of Stalingrad. While not the most strategically vital location for either side, its very name made it a point of obsession for both Hitler and Stalin. When the guns finally fell silent among the ruins in February 1943, over 1 million Wehrmacht and Soviet soldiers, not to mention innocent Soviet civilians, lay dead.

The idea of Stalingrad's capture began to germinate in Hitler's mind in April 1942, following the petering out of the Soviet counter-offensive that prevented the Wehrmacht taking Moscow. The objective was to take the city before racing on to secure the oilfields in the Caucasus beyond, simultaneously securing a vital supply for the German armies while cutting off the Soviet's access to it. With the Soviet offensive at Kharkov defeated in May, the path to Stalingrad lay open.

As General Timoschenko's battered forces retreated in the face of two German panzer armies (the 17th under Ewald von Kleist and the 6th under Friedrich Paulus) a Stalingrad Front was declared by the Soviets, which they frantically raced to fill with reserve forces from Moscow. The race was on to adequately prepare the city for the German onslaught. But it would not just be the soldiers who would be required to defend Stalingrad.

Almost 200,000 civilians were mobilised and organised into workers columns to dig anti-tank ditches up to six feet deep while army sappers laid mines. Even schoolchildren were deployed to construct earth walls around the precious petrol tanks along the Volga River. Anti-aircraft batteries were formed by young women, with guns situated on both banks of the Volga in order to defend vital positions such as

the Beketavka power station and the infamous Tractor Factory, which had been converted to build the much- feared T-34 tanks. Every single pair of hands would be needed if total annihilation was to be averted.

Overall command of the operation to save Stalingrad fell to the ruthless General Vasiliy Chuikov. Notorious for his incredibly explosive temper, Chuikov worked tirelessly to raise the morale of his beleaguered troops while instilling terror into any commanders that dared to imagine retreat. Any deserters would be shot without hesitation.

Chuikov's approach to the perilous situation was simple: "Time is blood." The longer the coming battle raged, the more it would cost the Germans. Every obstacle was to be placed in their way. Even immobile tanks were dug into positions to provide fire. If Stalingrad was to be taken, it would be inch by blood-soaked inch.

Firestorm

Having battled across the Don River on 21st August, the Germans began their assault on Stalingrad on the 23rd August even before they'd reached the Volga. Under the command of General von Ricthofen, the entire 4th Air Fleet, comprising 1,200 aircraft (both Junkers 88 and Heinkel 111 bombers) headed for Stalingrad to ignite a biblical inferno. In a total of 1,600 sorties, Richthofen's pilots dropped approximately 1,000 tons of explosives, losing only three planes in the process. Thousands of civilians died in the carnage, still in the city due to Stalin's refusal to evacuate them for fear of spreading mass panic. Wooden houses were reduced to ash as apartment blocks were either gutted or collapsed entirely. By indiscriminately carpet-bombing the entire city, the Luftwaffe hit the hospital, waterworks and telephone lines, as well as bombing the petrol tanks lining the river, sending flames 1,500 feet into the blackened sky above Stalingrad.

Sergeant Yakov Fedotovich Pavlov became a hero after his platoon recaptured and aggressively defended a building that came to be known as 'Pavlov's House'

With what was to become a lengthy bombardment now underway, the 16th Panzer Division surged across the steppe towards the city. Despite the valiant efforts of the anti-aircraft batteries, who rained 37mm shells down upon the invaders, the panzer crews pressed on, aided by Stuka aircraft. By the afternoon of the 23rd they reached the Volga.

Confident that such a pulverising would have broken the Soviet's will and ability to resist, the Germans anticipated a relatively swift victory. But in a dark twist of irony, they had actually helped to sow the seeds of their own downfall. The churned up remains of Stalingrad would prove to be a cramped killing field in which snipers and close-quarters fighting ruled. This was no place for the rapid, sweeping manoeuvres favoured by the Germans.

In the days that followed the terror bombing, General Hoth's forces slowly trudged forwards, pushing the Russian 64th Army back. Emboldened by the relatively weak Soviet resistance in the lead up to the assault, Paulus decided to send his men straight into the fray upon their arrival instead of allowing them to rest. As Germans fed into the streets, so did Soviet reinforcements.

The situation facing the Soviets was utterly dire, so desperate in fact, that as their men ran towards the enemy, machine gun posts were

The four-storey Pavlov's House became a symbol of Stalingrad's resistance to the bloody German assault

Defending Pavlov's House

The siege of Pavlov's House (named after Sergeant Yakov Pavlov, who contributed to its defence) cost the Germans dearly and became a symbol of the Red Army's will to resist.

Having retaken the four-storey building from the Germans, the soldiers of the 13th Guards Division positioned machine guns in every window and ringed the building with barbed wire and mines. They also discovered that an anti-tank gun on the roof of the building was too high up for the German tanks to fire on.

Overlooking the Volga (from which supplies were brought to the house via a trench), the defenders had a clear view to the north, south and west for a kilometre. From the 27th September until 25th November they managed to repel waves of German assaults until they were relieved by the Soviet reinforcements.

The air attacks on Stalingrad began on the third anniversary of the pact that should have prevented them

set up behind them. Their choice was clear: die fighting or die retreating. The fact that they had to rely on supplies shipped across the Volga under heavy German fire didn't help either.

Working in tandem with their pilot colleagues, the panzers continued to fight their way through the city, all the while conscious of the vulnerability of their tanks in the narrow streets. By 31st August the Germans were at the Stalingrad-Morozask railway. Paulus now firmly believed that the Russian 62nd and 64th armies could be divided and finished off.

The arrival of Marshal Georgy Zhukov two days earlier had again revealed the scale of the task facing the Soviets. Morale was collapsing under the strain of the German aerial bombardment, with one divisional commander resorting to lining up his men and shooting every tenth one until his gun ran out. Just as the Soviets were preparing to unleash a counter-attack in an attempt to stem the panzer advance, Zhukov began imploring Stalin to delay it.

The marshal discovered the troops assigned to the job were poorly equipped, low on ammunition and predominantly made up of old reservists. Yet despite the obvious flaws in the Red Army, Stalin became increasingly nervous, citing the encroachment of German tanks as the reason that any delay could prove fatal. Zhukov did eventually succeed in gaining an extra two days, but they made little difference, for the advance that proceeded was short-lived.

Fight back

The 1st Guards Army only managed to push on a few miles into the Russian steppe, while the 24th Army literally found itself back at square one, having totally failed to gain any ground. However, the attack had not been completely in vain. It had forced Paulus to divert his reserve forces just as the shattered remains of the 62nd and 64th armies were pushed back to the perimeters of the city. The Germans had paid heavily, losing six battalion commanders in a single day and seeing many companies decimated, some left with as few as 40 men.

From grenades to Molotov cocktails, the Soviets used all available means. Many rushed into the fray without weapons, forced to wait until a comrade fell before taking their rifle. It's no surprise that the life expectancy for a soldier arriving in the city was less than 24 hours.

With fewer than 40,000 fighters left to confront the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, the Germans believed that it was simply a matter of time before Stalingrad would fall.

Following a summit with Hitler in his Vinnitsa headquarters, Paulus unleashed the next major assault on 12th September. With yet another artillery bombardment and bombing attack having pounded the city beforehand, the Wehrmacht began to make progress, fighting their way towards the Mamayev Kurgan, a mound overlooking the Volga, also known as Hill 102 on account of its height in metres. Soldiers pressed on to the railway station as Hoth's panzer and infantry troops aimed for the grain elevator.

Stalin ordered that men be sent across the Volga to secure the west bank. The 13th Guards Division lined up to await the journey under German fire. Those that reached the bank leapt from the boats to rush the enemy, knowing that the slightest delay meant death. Close-quarter combat ensued as reinforcements poured in from both sides. The hill was strategically vital;

> "As Germans fed into the streets so did Soviet reinforcements"

Defining moment

Battle for the Mamayev Kurgan
12 September onwards

Aware that the loss of this strategically vital hill would hand the Germans total control of the Volga, Stalin orders troops be sent over to retake it. A bloody struggle for Hill 102 begins.

The hill overlooking the city had been of strategic importance as a line of defence for centuries

Timeline

1942

- **Bombing raid**
  On the third anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Germans pulverise Stalingrad from the air, killing thousands of people.
  23rd August 1942
- **Wehrmacht on the Volga**
  Such is the ferocity of the German assault, Hitler's forces gaze out over the Volga (not the buildings that used to block the view of it) by sunset.
  23rd August 1942
- **Stalingrad-Morozast railway**
  The Germans press on, fighting bitterly to reach the key railway line, forcing the desperate Soviets back.
  31st August 1942
- **Soviet counter-attack**
  The Soviets launch a doomed counter-attack in early September, gaining little ground but sparing the remnants of their 62nd and 64th Armies from the German advance.
  September 1942
- **Fresh German offensive**
  Paulus begins a new offensive by pounding the city with artillery and aerial bombardments. His men then reach the Mamayev Kurgan.
  12th September
- **Fighting in the factories**
  As the Germans continue their march further into the city they reach the industrial district. Fighting erupts as the Soviets struggle to hold key buildings, including the Tractor Factory.
  4th October

its loss would allow the Germans to control the entire river, across which all of the Soviet supplies had to travel.

Factories of death

The further the Germans advanced the stiffer the resistance they encountered. Every single building had to be fought for, with numerous tales of grossly outnumbered men holding out against wave upon wave of attacks. One of the most well-known examples is Pavlov's House, which is said to have cost the Germans more men than the entire thrust into France. In such encounters flamethrowers proved very effective, but it was the snipers, such as the famed Vasily Zaitsev, that reigned supreme among the rubble. Appropriately, the German name for this merciless fighting was Rattenkrieg (Rat War).

By early October the Germans began their assault on the factory district to the north of the city. Many of these installations, including the Red October Complex and the Tractor Factory, had been turned into fortresses, and these changed hands many times as the battle ebbed and flowed. In some instances, the panzers resorted to ramming the buildings to gain entry.

The key positions were finally in German hands come the end of October, but the price paid for them was nothing short of catastrophic.

Bombing raids and their attendant firestorms left Stalingrad a pulverised ruin, but the city fought on

German troops attempt to force their way through the battle-scarred city, but ultimately meet with failure

Defining moment

Germans attempt final breakthrough
11th November

Running out of supplies and shattered by the fighting, Paulus attempts to finally end the battle. The Germans force their way forwards, taking many buildings from the Soviets but failing to deliver a knockout blow.

The last heave of the attack has been curtailed by a rain of Katyusha and mortar fire. Just as winter approached the Wehrmacht found itself running out of steam, bled almost dry.

A final attempt at a decisive breakthrough came on 11th November. As the Luftwaffe obliterated the factory chimneys, infantry seized buildings from the enemy, only to relinquish them shortly after. Burning tanks littered the streets as the Soviets dug in, some down to their last rounds. Such was their determination, a band of 15 men held off a thrust towards the petrol tanks on the Volga. The tenacity of these courageous men led the Germans to believe that they were fighting "creatures". And it would be these seemingly superhuman warriors that would soon wreak an almighty revenge.

Thanks to the movement of industry back beyond the Volga, Soviet factories were continuing to produce an immense amount of weaponry. Some estimates place monthly tank production, including the much-feared T-34, at 2,200. Hitler not only underestimated his enemy's industrial capacity: he also genuinely believed them to be exhausted and at the very end of their strength.

This hubris made the thunderclap of Operation Uranus all the more stunning. The supposedly spent Soviets had in fact been secretly amassing a gargantuan force with which to launch a staggeringly ambitious flanking attack of brutal simplicity. A main assault force would set off over 100 miles west of Stalingrad, while another horde of troops struck out from south of the Don River as an armoured thrust launched from the south of the charred city. On the morning of 19th November, a huge Soviet bombardment opened fire as the snow fell. The Germans, supported by Italian and Romanian troops, didn't know what hit them. The encirclement of the 6th Army had begun, and would culminate in its destruction. Hitler's refusal to allow Paulus' men to retreat, combined with Goering's insistence that the Luftwaffe could keep the entrapped soldiers supplied, cemented their doom. By the first days of February 1943, Stalingrad was silent.

The horrific battle for the city is the bloodiest in human history and bore witness to animalistic fighting. In the words of Winston Churchill: "Stalingrad was the end of the beginning". It proved to be a traumatic reversal from which the Wehrmacht never fully recovered. The Red Army would march for Berlin. With over two years of conflict ahead, the outcome of World War II had already been settled in the ruins of Stalin's city, the fate of Hitler's Third Reich permanently sealed.

The Sniper Movement
As the anniversary of the October Revolution nears a cult of 'sniperism' begins to emerge, with Vasily Zaitsev at its head. Zaitsev, who killed 225 enemy soldiers during the battle, begins to train young snipers.
Mid October

The fall of the factories
After almost a month, the Germans finally have overall control of the area. However, Soviet defenders remain in the vicinity, with some of them even left inside the Tractor Factory.
Late October

Operation Uranus
With approximately 1 million men amassed over 100 miles from Stalingrad, the Soviets begin a huge encirclement operation, hoping to trap the Germans in the city and out on the steppe.
19th November

The net begins to close
Paulus is horrified to hear that the approaching Soviet forces now threaten both flanks of his 6th Army.
21st November

A panicked withdrawal
Paulus swiftly abandons his headquarters as Soviet tanks approach. General Walther von Seydlitz orders two infantry divisions to burn their supplies and retreat from Stalingrad.
21st November

Hitler dooms the 6th Army
With hope of a breakout fading fast, Hitler issues an order to the trapped 6th Army that, "Surrender is out of the question. Troops must fight on to the end."
22nd January 1943

1943

The 6th Army surrenders
Paulus' trapped forces begin to surrender. Approximately 91,000 troops are taken into captivity. Only 5,000 ever made it back to Germany.
31st January – 2nd February 1943

CI-CIA

D-DAY

D-DAY WAS AN INCREDIBLE UNDERTAKING THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE WAR, BUT BEHIND THE SCENES, THE ALLIES CLASHED AND TRAGEDY THREATENED THE OPERATION LONG BEFORE THEY HIT THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY

At approximately 6.30am he fell heavily, his pack lurching forward and with it his shoulders as the murky grey water hit him like a wall. He stumbled, the press of bodies behind him caring little for his lack of balance - only for their orders and whistling of bullets overhead, the steady crunch of artillery and the rattle of machine guns from the horizon where the sand became hillside. A hand took his shoulder roughly, scooping him up and pushing him forward in one smooth motion. He didn't hear what was being shouted, but he understood the message. If he didn't keep going, he would die here.

Five hours and 12 minutes before the 8th Infantry Regiment crashed from their landing craft and onto Utah Beach and a soldier lurched into murky grey waters, another military man exhaled steadily to bury his nerves. Wind rushed through the open hatch of the transport plane as it lurched drunkenly like a child's kite in a gale, tracer fire lighting up the sky around them as the German guns came alive. In the gloom, men smoked in silence - some prayed. The order was given and the red light flicked on, as one they came to their feet - cigarettes extinguished and prayers incomplete. He jumped and France rushed up to meet him.

That same night, perhaps 30 or 40 minutes before the the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne leaped from their planes into the darkness of Normandy, British prime minister Winston Churchill turned from the window. He was late to bed by habit, but to his wife, Clementine, he looked restless. His features softened momentarily from the patrician scowl of a thousand newsreels, but you'd have to know him as she did to notice. "Do you realise", he said suddenly, taking the cigar from his lips, "that by the time you wake up in the morning, 20,000 men may have been killed?"

Churchill's fears of a catastrophic death toll awaiting the Allies and the fact that US troops were first onto the beaches and first from the planes was linked. From when the US had joined the war in December 1941, Churchill had been deferring Roosevelt's steadily more forceful pleas to take the war to France - instead they concentrated on North Africa and Italy. To Churchill's mind, Italy was the 'soft underbelly' of the Axis, but to the US, they were simply protecting Britain's vulnerable colonies at their own expense.

If Churchill was haunted by the losses the British suffered in WWI, then his fears manoeuvred him toward a similar strategic conceit. Like his bloody Turkish beachhead at Gallipoli, Italy was a tougher nut to crack and the 'soft underbelly' had turned into a gruelling crawl up the mountainous peninsula. Stalin too was adding pressure to open a second front and to divide German forces from the epic slaughter going on in the frozen east.

THE LANDINGS

THE DEPLOYMENT OF ALLIED TROOPS ON 6TH JUNE, D-DAY

Speciality Key

- COMBAT ENGINEERS
- COVERT INTELLIGENCE GATHERING
- AMPHIBIOUS MEDIUM TANK
- LIGHT INFANTRY, VERSATILE AND RELIABLE
- AIR ASSAULT, LIGHT INFANTRY
- SPECIAL FORCES TRAINED FOR COASTAL ASSAULT
- INFANTRY, SPECIAL FORCES
- INFANTRY, FAST TANK
- MINE CLEARANCE, BRIDGING AND TRANSPORT

Commander in Chief Air Force:

Air Chief Marshall Trafford Leigh-Mallory

1ST US ARMY

Commander: General Omar Bradley

VII CORPS

Commander: Major General JL Collins

4th Infantry Division 'Ivy'
Commander: Major General Raymond Barton
Objective: First troops onto Utah Beach.

9th Infantry Division 'Old Reliables'
Commander: Major General Manton S Eddy
Objective: Take and hold Utah Beach.

79th Infantry Division 'Cross of Lorraine'
Commander: Major General Ira T Wyche
Objective: Take and hold Utah Beach.

90th Infantry Division 'Tough 'Ombres'
Commander: Brig-General Jay W MacKelvie
Objective: Take and hold Utah Beach.

30 Commando Assault Unit 'Red Indians' (British)
Commander: Captain G Pike **Objective:** Take radar station at Douvres-la-Delivrande.

70th Tank Batalion 'Thunderbolts'
Commander: Lt-Colonel John C Welborn
Objective: Support landing at Utah Beach.

237th Combat Engineer Battalion
Commander: Major Herschel E Linn **Objective:** Clear mines and obstacles at Utah Beach.

299th Combat Engineer Battalion
Commander: Colonel Milton Jewett **Objective:** Clear mines and obstacles at Utah Beach.

Utah

V CORPS

Commander: Major General Leonard T Gerow

1st Infantry Division 'The Big Red One'
Commander: Major General Clarence Huebner
Objective: Take and hold Omaha Beach.

29th Infantry Division 'Blue And Gray'
Commander: Major General Charles Gebhardt
Objective: Take and hold Omaha Beach.

Ranger assault group
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel James Earl Rudder

2nd Ranger Battalion
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel James Earl Rudder **Objective:** Capture battery at Pointe du Hoc.

5th Ranger Battalion
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Max Schneider **Objective:** Capture battery at Pointe du Hoc.

Pointe du Hoc

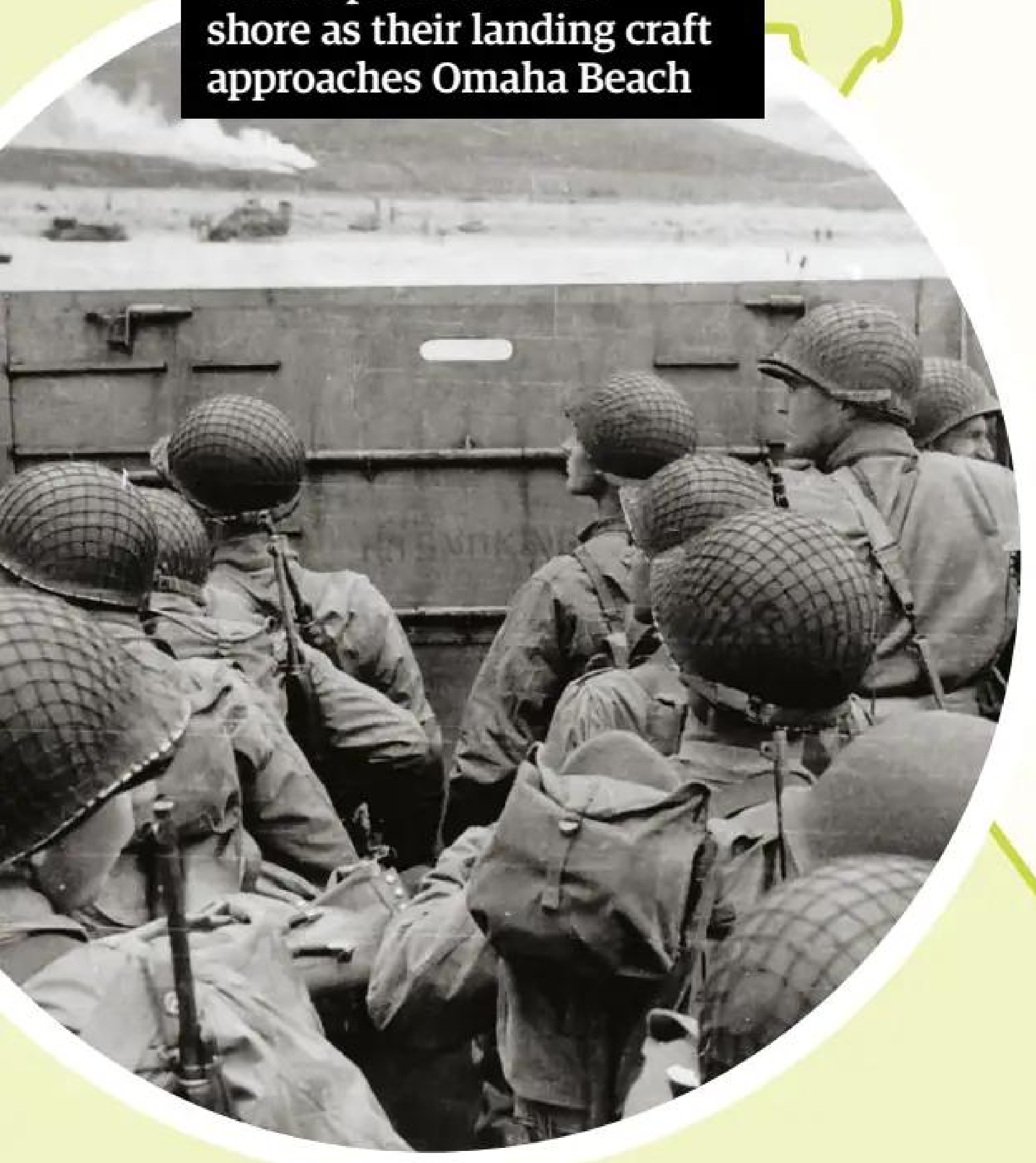
743rd Tank Battalion
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel John S Upham **Objective:** Support landing at Omaha Beach.

Omaha

INLAND

82nd Airborne Division 'All American Division'
Commander: Major General Matthew Ridgway **Objective:** Secure left flank and rear of VI Corps.

101st Airborne Division 'Screaming Eagles'
Commander: Major General Maxwell D Taylor **Objective:** Secure left flank and rear of VI Corps.



US troops look to the shore as their landing craft approaches Omaha Beach

US Army Rangers at the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc

Supreme Commander:
General Dwight D Eisenhower

Commander in Chief Naval Force:
Admiral Bertram Ramsay

Commander in Chief Land Forces:
General Field Marshall Montgommery

2ND ARMY (BRITISH/CANADIAN)

Commander:
Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey

XXX Corps
Commander: Lieutenant General Gerard Bucknall

50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division
Commander: Major General DAH Graham

69th Infantry Brigade
Objective: Take and hold Gold Beach.

151st Infantry Brigade
Objective: Take and hold Gold Beach.

231st Infantry Brigade
Commander: Brigadier Sir Alexander Stanier
Objective: Take and hold Gold Beach.

56th Infantry Brigade
Objective: Take and hold Gold Beach.

8 Armoured Brigade
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel John S Upham **Objective:** Support the landing at Gold Beach.

No 47 (Royal Marine) Commando
Commander: Lieutenant Colonel CF Phillips
Objective: Capture the port of Port-en-Bessin.

1st Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment
Commander: Support Royal Marine assault.

89th Field Company, Royal Engineers
Objective: Clear Gold Beach exit of mines and other obstacles.

90th Field Company, Royal Engineers
Objective: Clear Gold Beach exit of mines and other obstacles.

3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade
Commander: Major General Rodney FL Keller

7th Canadian Infantry Brigade
Objective: Take and hold Juno Beach.

8th Canadian Infantry Brigade
Commander: Brigadier Harry Wickwire Foster
Objective: Take and hold Juno Beach.

2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade
Objective: Support landing at Juno Beach.

79th Armoured Division [British]
Commander: Major General Sir Percy Hobart
Objective: Clear mines and assist landing at Juno Beach.

9th Canadian Infantry Brigade
Objective: Reserves, support landing at Juno Beach.

Commander:
Major-General TG Rennie

8th Brigade (Assault Brigade)
Objective: Take and hold Sword Beach.

9th Brigade
Objective: Take and hold Sword Beach.

185th Brigade
Commander: Brigadier KP Smith
Objective: Take and hold Sword Beach.

5th Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment
Objective: Support landing at Sword Beach.

27th Armoured Brigade
Commander: Brigadier George Erroll Prior-Palmer
Objective: Support landing at Sword Beach.

1st Special Service Brigade
Commander: Brigadier Lord Lovat
Objective: Capture key German defences.

4th Special Service Brigade
Commander: Brigadier BW Leicester
Objective: Secure the flanks of Sword Beach.

Gold
Juno
Sword

GENERAL DWIGHT D EISENHOWER

American, 1890-1969

Commander of the Allied forces in Europe and future US president, Eisenhower had to wrestle with politicians and bruised egos - including Winston Churchill's - in order to push through the daring attack on Nazi-held France that would become D-Day.

Britain, its Commonwealth and its empire might have 'stood alone' in defence of Western democracy for the first two years of the war, but now they looked to be sidelined. Domestic US politics had come to define not just the war's long-term objectives - many of which, like the decolonisation of the British Empire and full repayment for the huge war loans the UK had incurred, Churchill begrudgingly acknowledged - but battlefield tactics.

While Roosevelt and Churchill made speeches and delighted the crowds at the Quebec Conference in August 1943, General George C Marshall, the US Army chief of staff and leading evangelist for a cross-channel invasion of France, went up to bat in what Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the imperial general staff, described in his diaries as a "painful meeting" between the Allies' top brass. His patience for Churchill's flimflam - the PM had suggested alternative campaigns in the Greek islands, the Balkans and even Norway - long since worn out, Marshall threw down an ultimatum: either Britain support a full-tilt invasion of France, or the US would drop the 'Germany First' strategy and concentrate all of its effort on defeating the Japanese in the Pacific. Under great secrecy, 1st May 1944 - later changed to 5th June - was nominated as the date in which Operation Overlord would begin. Normandy was chosen as the location over Brittany or the Cotentin Peninsula - both of which would make them vulnerable to encirclement - and the Pas de Calais, which though the shortest distance between Britain and France, was the most heavily fortified. US General Dwight D Eisenhower was appointed commander of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) - effectively all Allied forces in Europe - while British General Bernard Montgomery was named commander of the 21st Army Group, comprising all of 39 divisions taking part in the initial invasion.

> "D-DAY WOULD BE THE SINGLE LARGEST AMPHIBIOUS MILITARY OPERATION IN THE HISTORY OF WARFARE"

D-Day would be the single largest amphibious military operation in the history of warfare, with its three original landing zones expanded to five. First the Americans in Utah and Omaha, then an hour later the British and Canadians in Gold, June and Sword, covering an 80-kilometre (50-mile) stretch of the French coastline. The landing of 150,000 troops by sea, supported by naval bombardment, would be preceded by daring parachute and glider drops further inland. Dropped from the skies above Normandy, 30,000 men of the US 82nd and 101st Airborne along with Canadian and British units of the 6th Airborne Division would be tasked to secure bridges and crossroads, establish river crossings and take out artillery batteries.

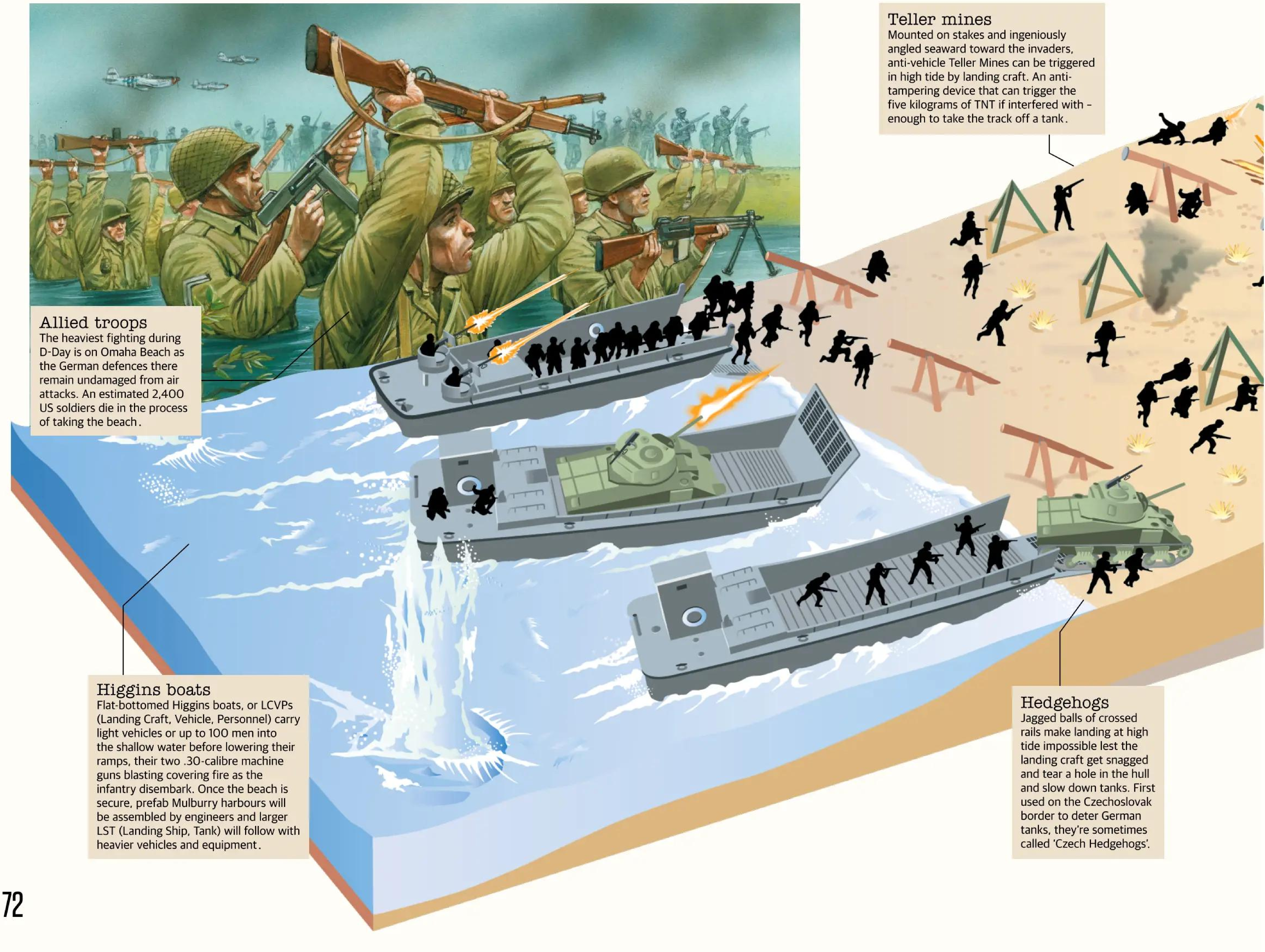
As planning intensified, Churchill found himself unable to make direct contact with the US president that he'd once written to so fondly as "your American cousin" and instead was fobbed off with the prickly marshal, the architect of the strategy that was causing the PM such anxiety in the first place. "Struck by how very tired and worn out the Prime Minister looks now", wrote Jock Colville, his private secretary.

> "HITLER AND HIS GENERALS REMAINED CONVINCED THAT AN ASSAULT WAS MOST LIKELY TO COME FROM CALAIS, WHERE THEY CONCENTRATED THEIR HEAVY DEFENCES"

Converted Cunard liners began to disgorge their cargo – both men and the equipment they would need – in preparation, turning the South of England into a vast khaki patchwork of army camps. Between January and June 1944, 700,000 US troops had arrived in Britain, adding to a total of around 2.88 million soldiers billeted around the country. Around 5 per cent of this number would take part in D-Day – the rest would be needed for the campaigns that followed.

When the first US troops arrived in North Africa in November 1942, they were raw. Fresh from basic training and flush with confidence, their learning curve had been steep and costly, but the generals that prepared for D-Day had experienced amphibious landings in Sicily and Italy – albeit not on this scale – and held no illusions about the strength of German defences. Nonetheless, training was thorough and the first large-scale exercise not only revealed systemic weaknesses in the Allied forces, but was a catastrophe on such a scale that D-Day was very nearly called off all together.

Slapton Sands in Devon had been chosen for its resemblance to Utah Beach, and on 22 April 1944, 30,000 troops, plus tanks and landing craft, prepared to take the sand from its defenders, played by the Royal Navy. For the first few days the emphasis was on embarkation, as officers corralled



Teller mines
Mounted on stakes and ingeniously angled seaward toward the invaders, anti-vehicle Teller Mines can be triggered in high tide by landing craft. An anti-tampering device that can trigger the five kilograms of TNT if interfered with – enough to take the track off a tank.

Allied troops
The heaviest fighting during D-Day is on Omaha Beach as the German defences there remain undamaged from air attacks. An estimated 2,400 US soldiers die in the process of taking the beach.

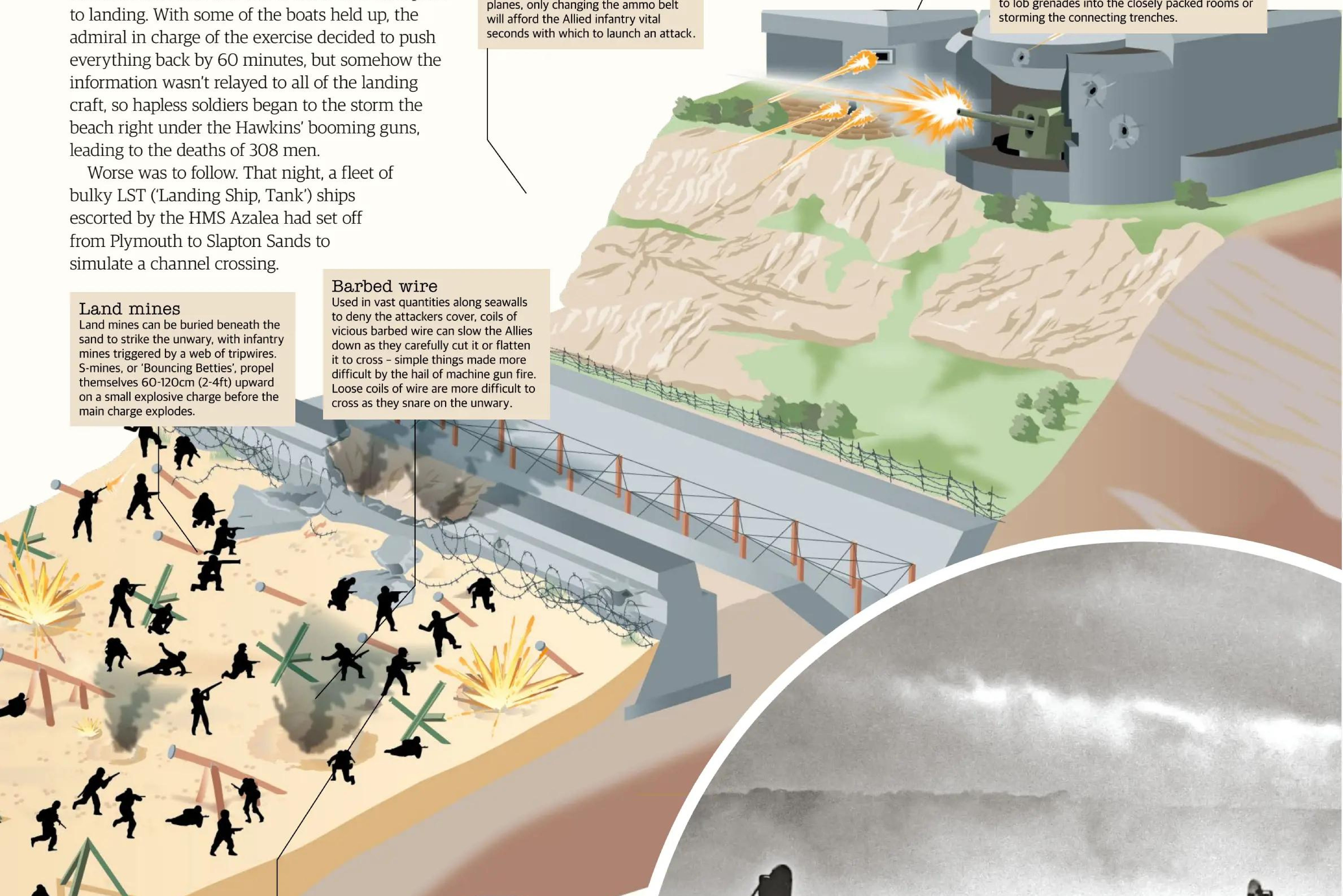
Higgins boats
Flat-bottomed Higgins boats, or LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) carry light vehicles or up to 100 men into the shallow water before lowering their ramps, their two .30-calibre machine guns blasting covering fire as the infantry disembark. Once the beach is secure, prefab Mulburry harbours will be assembled by engineers and larger LST (Landing Ship, Tank) will follow with heavier vehicles and equipment.

Hedgehogs
Jagged balls of crossed rails make landing at high tide impossible lest the landing craft get snagged and tear a hole in the hull and slow down tanks. First used on the Czechoslovak border to deter German tanks, they're sometimes called 'Czech Hedgehogs'.

their charges in and out of transport boats, then on 28th April the first full assault began.

Eisenhower had ordered that live ammunition be used in order to get the troops familiar with the sights and sounds of bombardment, and so the HMS Hawkins was due to shell the beach prior to landing. With some of the boats held up, the admiral in charge of the exercise decided to push everything back by 60 minutes, but somehow the information wasn't relayed to all of the landing craft, so hapless soldiers began to the storm the beach right under the Hawkins' booming guns, leading to the deaths of 308 men.

Worse was to follow. That night, a fleet of bulky LST ('Landing Ship, Tank') ships escorted by the HMS Azalea had set off from Plymouth to Slapton Sands to simulate a channel crossing.



Machine gun nest
Connected to the bunkers and pillboxes by trenches, machine gun nests guard the trails off the beach, pinning down the attackers from their superior position with suppressing fire from the infamous MG42. Though vulnerable to bombardment by Allied ships and planes, only changing the ammo belt will afford the Allied infantry vital seconds with which to launch an attack.

Artillery casement
Safely encased in thick concrete, German artillery positions shell Allied ships approaching the beach. Taking them out prior to landing is a crucial part of the early bombardment from sea or air, as not even light tanks have the firepower to dent their shell. Infantry have to take out casements the hard way, getting under the guns to lob grenades into the closely packed rooms or storming the connecting trenches.

Land mines
Land mines can be buried beneath the sand to strike the unwary, with infantry mines triggered by a web of tripwires. S-mines, or 'Bouncing Betties', propel themselves 60-120cm (2-4ft) upward on a small explosive charge before the main charge explodes.

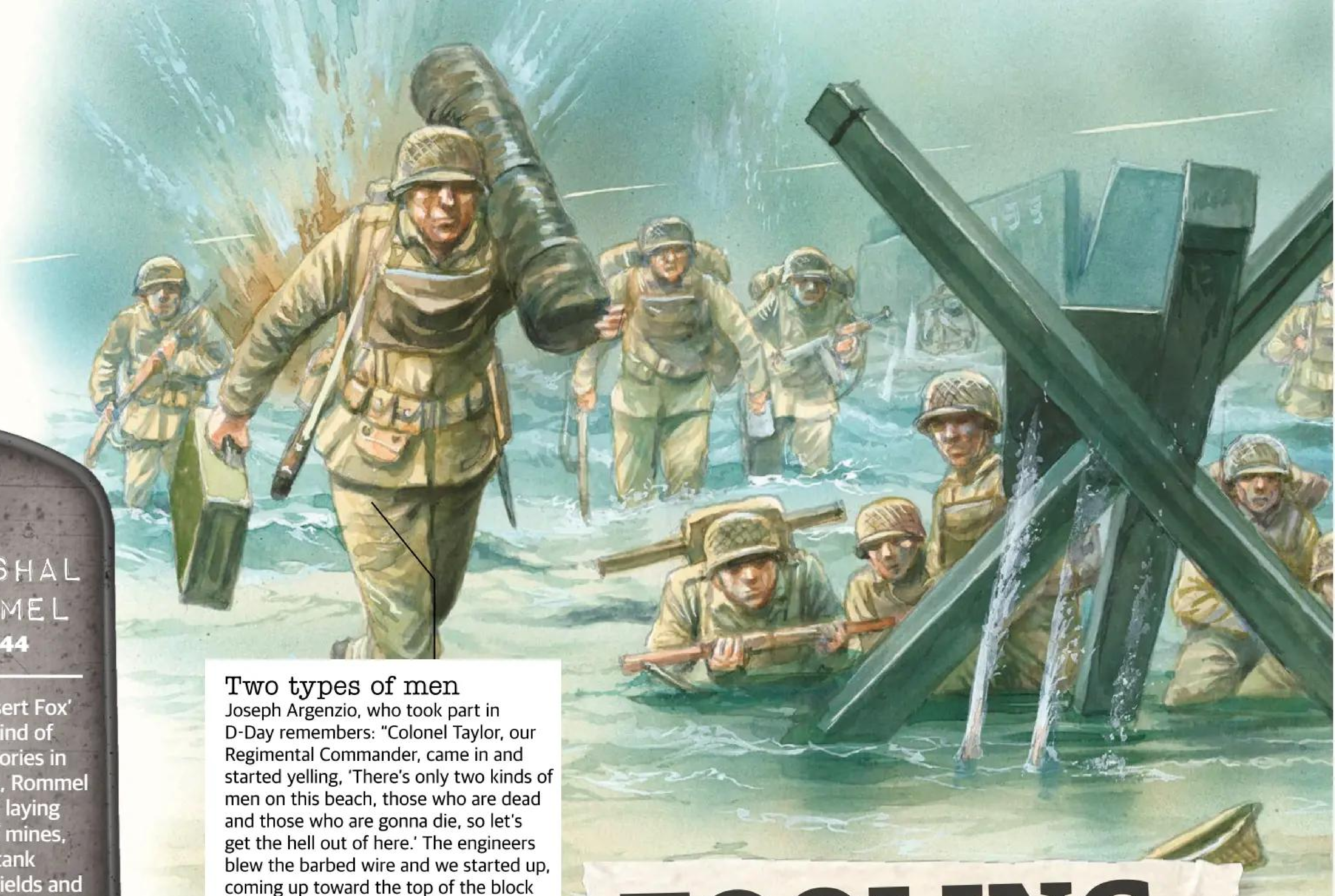
Barbed wire
Used in vast quantities along seawalls to deny the attackers cover, coils of vicious barbed wire can slow the Allies down as they carefully cut it or flatten it to cross – simple things made more difficult by the hail of machine gun fire. Loose coils of wire are more difficult to cross as they snare on the unwary.

Seawall
The 3m (9.8ft) concrete seawall is as much protection against coastal erosion and unseasonably high tides as it is Allied assault, but it can make exiting the beach difficult for infantry and impossible for vehicles. However, it does provide the attackers with rare shelter from the German guns.

FIELD MARSHAL BERNARD MONTGOMERY

British, 1887-1976

Commander of Allied ground forces during Operation Overlord, it was Rommel's rival, Field Marshal Montgomery, who put Eisenhower's plans for D-Day into action. He was heavily criticised by American generals for his failure to capture Caen, the largest city in Normandy.



Two types of men
Joseph Argenzio, who took part in D-Day remembers: "Colonel Taylor, our Regimental Commander, came in and started yelling, 'There's only two kinds of men on this beach, those who are dead and those who are gonna die, so let's get the hell out of here.' The engineers blew the barbed wire and we started up, coming up toward the top of the block hole, fighting our way up."

Like ducks, the HMS Azalea led the eight landing craft in single-file across Lyme Bay, when out of the darkness vicious German E-boats – souped-up fast attack craft that prowled the English Channel – opened fire with their torpedoes. Out on a routine patrol, they had been lured toward Lyme Bay by the unusually high British radio traffic. Unwilling to expose just how well defended the bay was and risk the Nazis finding out why it was so closely guarded, the shore batteries remained silent while the HMS Azalea tried to fight them off alone, leading to two landing craft being sunk while two were severely damaged. Unaware of the dangers – the HMS Azalea's crew had no idea the US officers on the LSTs were on a different radio frequency – they were ill-prepared, lifeboats were slow to launch and panicked soldiers put their life jackets on incorrectly, the weight of their packs flipping many over in the water where they drowned face down.

Records show that 198 sailors and 551 soldiers died, but until the bodies could be recovered there were serious fears that officers with intimate knowledge of D-Day had been captured and would divulge the whole plan under the harsh glare of the German interrogation lamps. Operation Overlord hadn't been fatally compromised though, as the officers kept quiet and radio codes were standardised as a result.

Though Hitler and his generals remained convinced that an assault was most likely to come from Calais, where they had concentrated their heavy defences, the 'Desert Fox', Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who had been sent to

FIELD MARSHAL ERWIN ROMMEL

German, 1891-1944

Legendary 'Desert Fox' and mastermind of German victories in North Africa, Rommel oversaw the laying of millions of mines, thousands of tank traps and made fields and beaches impassable to gliders. Almost alone among the German high command, Rommel was convinced the Allies would land at Normandy.

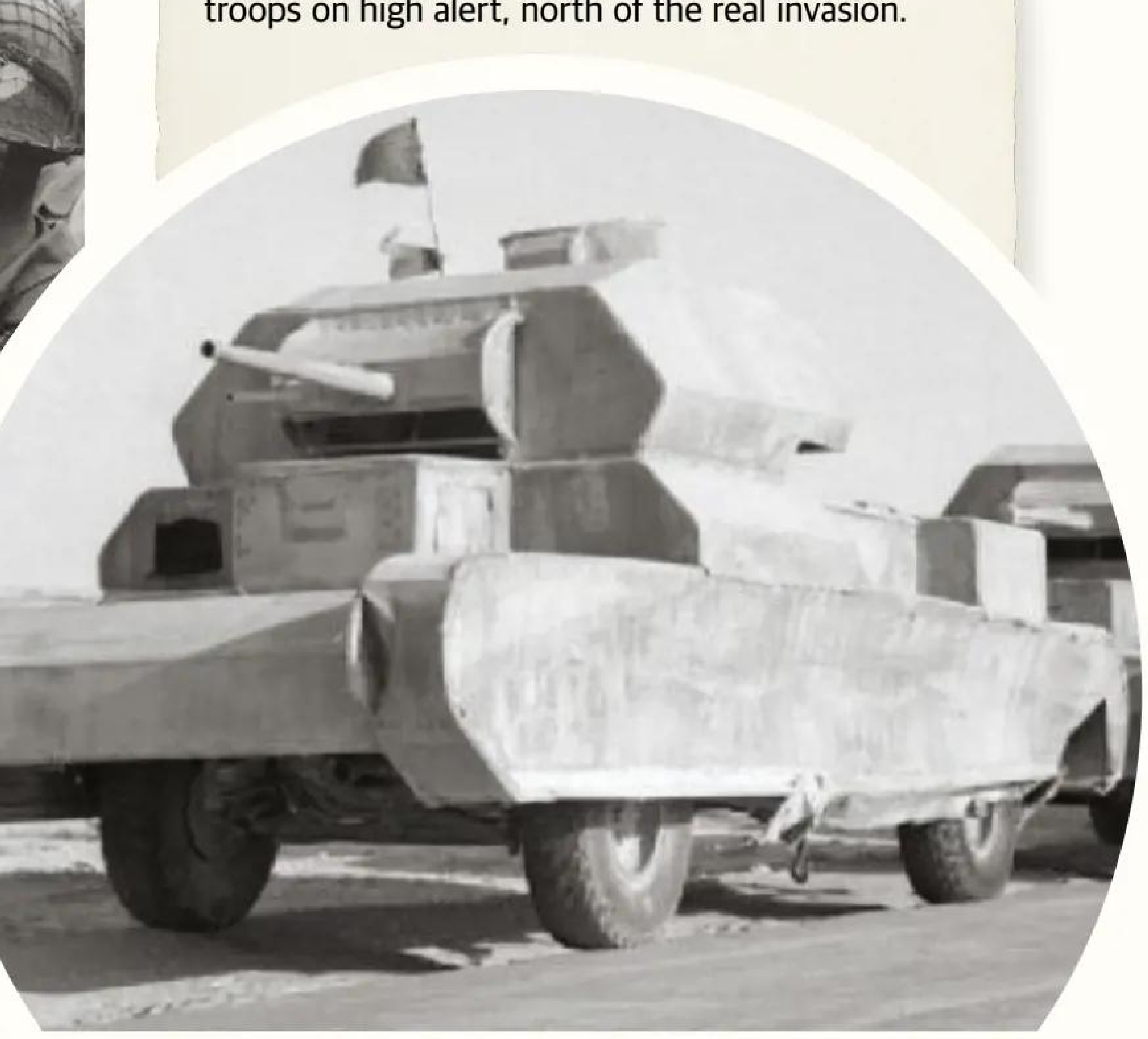
> "HE WENT FROM GROUP TO GROUP AND SHOOK HANDS WITH AS MANY MEN AS HE COULD. HE SPOKE A FEW WORDS TO EVERY MAN AS HE SHOOK HIS HAND AND WISHED HIM SUCCESS"

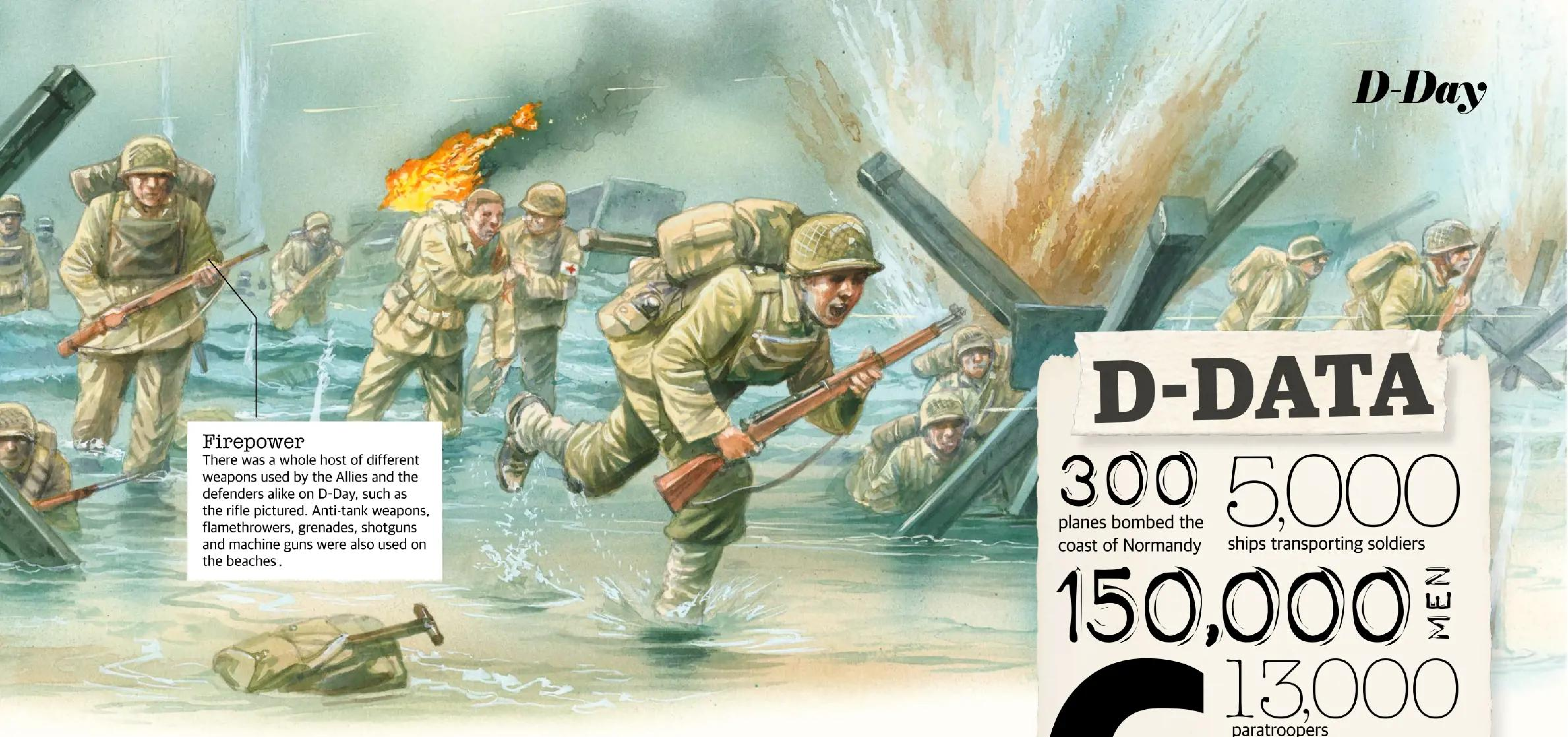
General Eisenhower talks to paratroopers in England before D-Day

FOOLING HITLER

Operation Bodyguard was the umbrella term for an elaborate, multi-pronged deception campaign that involved all branches of the armed forces and risked MI5's most valuable double agents.

Inflatable tanks and planes in the Kent fields fooled German reconnaissance planes into thinking that Allies would dash across the channel to Calais, as well as steady bombing raids to soften up a target that would never be hit, while a network of 'trusted' German agents secretly working for British intelligence kept up a misleading flow of information. Intelligence from double agents highlighted a planned invasion of the French Bay of Biscay, another fake army and convenient radio intercepts in Egypt teased a planned invasion via Crete and the Balkans. Right up to D-Day itself – and for days afterward – Hitler and much of the German high command believed Normandy was a diversion – helped by a massive air-drop of dummies over the fields around Calais. Sacks stuffed with straw and accompanied by packages that simulated the sound of gunfire held many divisions of Nazi troops on high alert, north of the real invasion.





Firepower
There was a whole host of different weapons used by the Allies and the defenders alike on D-Day, such as the rifle pictured. Anti-tank weapons, flamethrowers, grenades, shotguns and machine guns were also used on the beaches.

France in early 1944 to beef up the defences, saw the vulnerability of Normandy. To the alarm of Allied military planners, who had put together an amazingly detailed mosaic of aerial photographs, coupled with intercepted traffic from Bletchley Park's crack codebreakers, and information on the ground from the French Resistance – the most recent images showed that holes were been dug in fields that had been nominated for glider landings. These holes would be filled with stakes and they'd be wired up to mines, turning the whole landing area into a web of explosive death that would ignite as soon as one wheel touched down, thanks to Rommel's military know-how.

More mines and barbwire were laid on the beaches, trenches were dug and low-lying fields were flooded to prevent aircraft landing. It was clear that the window for a successful operation was not only closing quickly, but might have already slammed shut. The weather too turned against the Allies and they were forced to hold off, on the advice of the RAF's meteorological experts, for 6th June, where the full moon would give pilots maximum visibility and the low tide would allow the Allies to land their troops well away from Rommel's new killing ground. If they didn't take this shot, the next available opportunity would be weeks away, but with a storm on the horizon and the growing German preparedness, it could be much too late.

Meanwhile in occupied France, German meteorologists had also foreseen a storm, but were so confident that it would hit the French coast much earlier that Rommel returned to Germany for his wife's birthday and to meet with Hitler to plead for more tanks. The Führer believed strongly in the doctrine of 'defence in depth' – holding back his army's strongest units further inland to mount a counterattack, while Rommel and a handful of others believed that the best course of action was to drive their enemy back from the coastline. The Desert Fox knew from his campaigns in North

D-DATA

300 planes bombed the coast of Normandy

5,000 ships transporting soldiers

150,000 MEN

6 parachute regiments

13,000 paratroopers

20,000 tons of supplies unloaded at Utah and Omaha every day

50,000 tons of gasoline needed for the first month of the invasion

30,000 vehicles used in the operation

800 transport planes

10,000 German losses on 6 June

448,000 tons of ammunition

GERMAN DEFENCES

Fortress

Weapons: Connected to numerous smaller pillboxes by trenches or concrete tunnels, they could boast a huge array of artillery and machine guns, as well as firing positions for infantry.
Strength: Heavily fortified networks of concrete and steel, they were impervious to tank and light artillery. Often manned by the fanatical Waffen SS rather than regular Wehrmacht soldiers, the defenders would often fight to the last man.
Weakness: Being positioned where they could defend French ports left them exposed to attack.

Pillbox

Weapons: Most often used for machine guns, but they could also be designed for anti-tank guns or mortars, while firing slots existed for infantry riflemen.
Strength: Encased in concrete and steel, they were the infantry's worst nightmare – impervious to the small artillery and tank fire from the forces coming ashore.
Weakness: Confined spaces made them vulnerable to flame throwers, satchel charges and grenades lobbed through the firing slots.

Minefield

Weapons: Usually mixed anti-tank 'T-mines' and anti-personnel 'S-mines' (also known as the 'Bouncing Betty', they would shoot into the air, spraying shrapnel), many attached to tripwires or concrete anti-tank barriers.
Strength: Aside from the sheer devastation caused, the threat of mines could slow advance to a crawl and leave the attackers demoralised.
Weakness: The shifting sands could often move or bury mines even deeper, and they couldn't be relied upon to detonate.

FIELD MARSHAL GERD VON RUNDSTEDT

German, 1875-1953

Commander of the defence of Belgium and France, Gerd von Rundstedt expected an Allied invasion to come from Calais and so decided to withhold armoured units from the coast in order to meet it. Seen largely as a mere figurehead by Hitler, his command structure was fractured.

Africa and Italy that once the Allies gained a toehold, their victory was almost certain.

Feverish preparation and anxiety dominated the morning of 5th June 1944. On airfields across England, men painted out the markings on transport planes, while over the choppy English Channel, Royal Navy minesweepers frantically cleared the path. At 10pm, while the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne sat waiting by their planes at Greenham Common airfield, Eisenhower paid an impromptu visit. "They looked so young and brave", recalled his driver Kay Summersby. "I stood by the car and watched as the general walked among them… He went from group to group and shook hands with as many men as he could. He spoke a few words to every man as he shook his hand and wished him success." He later confessed "it's very hard to look a soldier in the eye when you fear that you are sending him to his death."

While Eisenhower dashed from runway to runway, Sir Alan Brooke scratched his fears in his diary, that "it may well be the most ghastly disaster of the whole war. I wish to God it were safely over."

Somewhere around 6am, rifles barked death in the grey light as the men of the 101st Airborne battled on through the morning. With his comrades scattered across the fields, he had joined an ad hoc unit, full of men he barely recognised – every few minutes, rustling in the undergrowth would precede an urgent whisper of "Flash!" and the reply, "Thunder!", and more paratroopers would join their band. It didn't matter that the officer leading them wasn't his or that he'd twisted his ankle in the drop, they had secured their objective. The beach exits were safe and the army landing at Utah could concentrate on the enemy in front of them, not the enemy around the corner.

The soldier hadn't noticed the water turn to sand as the 8th Infantry collided with Utah Beach, but he knew when to stop running. His lungs raw and his breathing heavy, he crouched at the foot of the incline – with the machine-gun nests silenced it was a sanctuary. Bodies floated in the water or lay face down in the sand behind him, but already units were forming as officers barked orders, checking their weapons and moving them on up and over the sand. Some lit cigarettes, others joked with nervous relief. There were other battles to fight. He exhaled slowly, hefted his pack and started moving forward.

Hours later and a world away, Winston Churchill stepped up to the dispatch box, the Commons roaring in approval. His features softened, a slight smile dancing at the corner of his mouth. Away from the behind-the-scenes tussles for control, of the set-backs and the catastrophes, and of the gut-wrenching dread of the night before, this old warhorse was finally back on the battlefield. "I have also to announce to the House", he rumbled, growing with every vowel, "that during the night and the early hours of this morning the first of the series of landings in force upon the European continent has taken place…"

15 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT D-DAY

D means… what?

So innocuous an origin that it's actually amazing – D-Day means simply 'date', which along with H-Hour – 'time' – were used by the US Army as far back as World War I as shorthand in briefings.

The invasion of Normandy included a staggering amount of vehicles

Drone warfare

The Germans fielded remote-control Goliath mini-tanks better known as 'beetles.' Small, tracked and laden with high explosives, they were steered by a joystick into tanks and tightly packed infantry. They were of limited effect.

British soldiers inspect three captured 'beetles'

Friends in the air

Although primarily concerned with the Pacific War in 1944, the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force both provided air support for the D-Day landings.

An Australian Spitfire at RAF Redhill in Surrey, returned from a raid over Northern France

The other Allies

One regiment of Free French and one regiment of Polish Armed Forces In the West also took part in the Battle of Normandy, as well as forces from the Belgian, Greek, Czechoslovakian, Norwegian and Dutch armies in exile.

Members of a Polish tank regiment scan the horizon

A Russian Cossack volunteer in German Army uniform, not unlike those who fought at Normandy

The other axis

German troops weren't alone in defending Normandy on D-Day either. The Wehrmacht's 709th and 243rd Static Infantry Division was comprised of former Soviet POWs, as well as conscripts and volunteers from Poland and Georgia.

D-day wasn't the end

After D-Day, the Battle of Normandy lasted another two months, with Paris finally falling to the Allies in August 1944. Operation Overlord wasn't just confined to the beaches, it was the plan for the complete liberation of France.

VIVE DE GAULLE

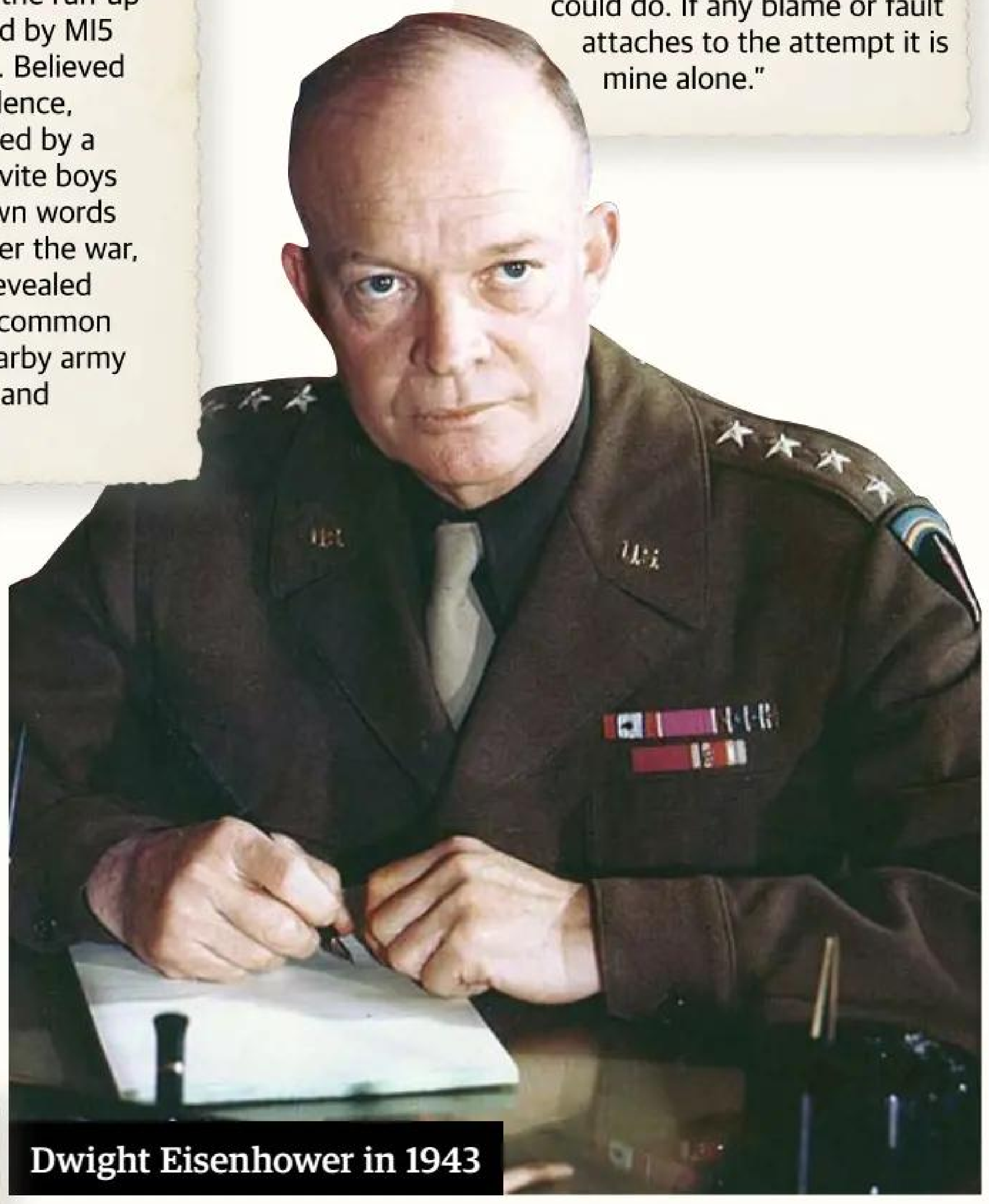
Free French tanks lead the Allies through the Arc du Triomphe on 26 August 1944

Crossword conspiracy?

A series of *Daily Telegraph* crossword answers – Juno, Sword, Gold, Omaha, Mulberry (code for the prefab harbours), Neptune (code for the naval assault) and Overlord – in the run-up to D-Day were investigated by MI5 as a possible security leak. Believed at the time to be a coincidence, the crossword was compiled by a headmaster who would invite boys into his study to write down words into the grid. Speaking after the war, two of his former pupils revealed that the codewords were common knowledge around the nearby army camp – only the locations and timings were unknown.

Eisenhower prepares for failure

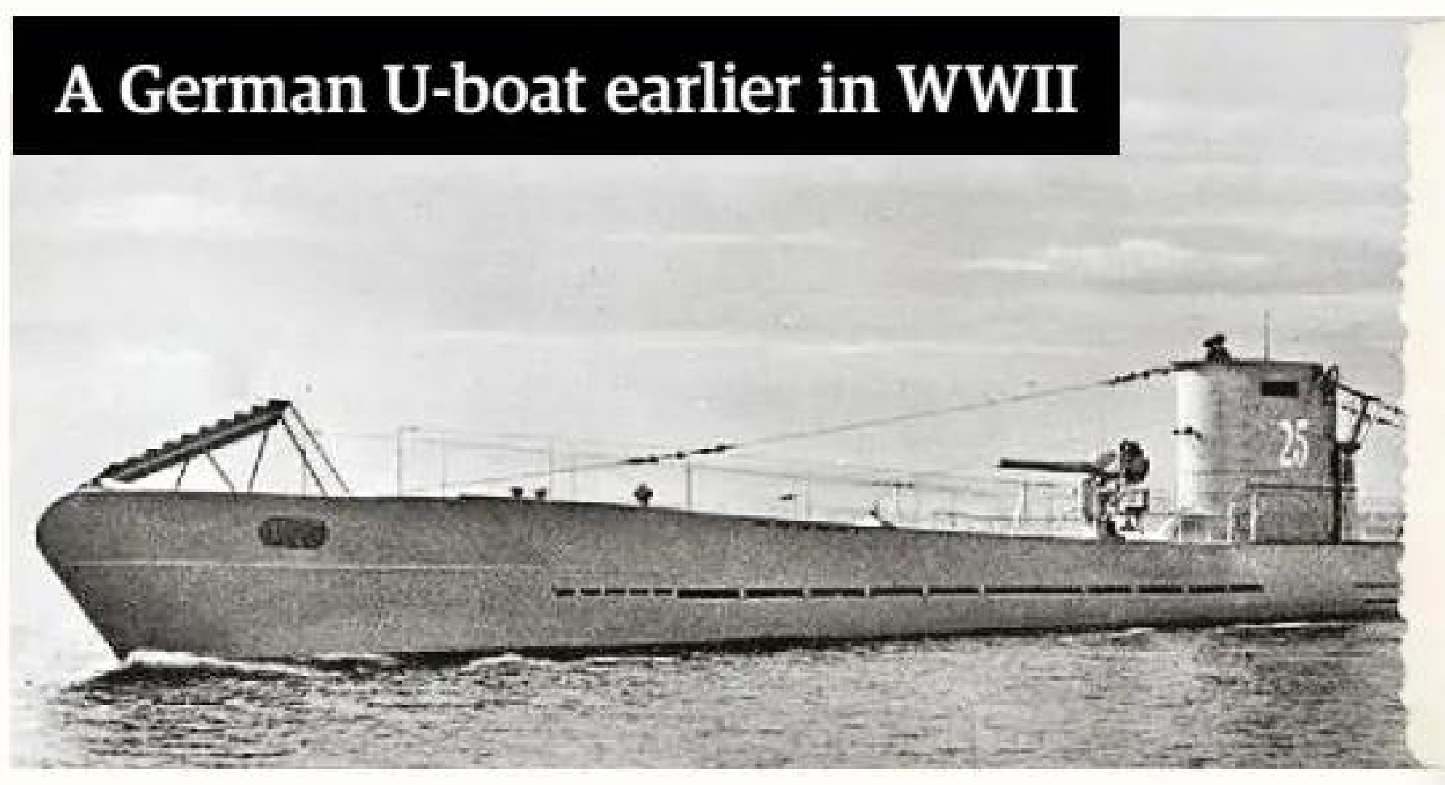
Eisenhower prepared a speech, which he would give along with his resignation if D-Day failed: "The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."



Dwight Eisenhower in 1943

One man could have ruined it all

One of MI5's double agents involved in the Operation Bodyguard deception knew the whole thing was a ruse. On 29th April 1944, the German-born Johnny Jebsen – codename Artist – was kidnapped from Portugal, drugged and taken to Berlin where he was tortured in the Gestapo headquarters, before being sent to a concentration camp (his arrival was registered along with his broken ribs), from where he simply disappeared. He took the secret of D-Day to his grave.



A German U-boat earlier in WWII

Hitler's kamikaze U-boats

As D-Day began, Hitler ordered U-Boat captains to proceed full speed to Normandy and fire all their torpedoes before ramming their vessels into Allied battleships. No U-Boats were near enough to take advantage of this particular suicide mission.

A member of the French Resistance with a US soldier in 1944

Sir Alec Guinness, pictured in 1973

Sending the prisoners to Texas

From D-Day and through to the Battle of Normandy, the US Army sent 30,000 prisoners a month to POW camps in Texas – the single largest concentration of German POWs in the US.

The French Resistance went all-out

In the run-up to D-Day the French Resistance delivered 3,000 written reports and 700 radio reports on German defenses in Normandy, and the night before D-Day they launched a massive attack, cutting phone lines, blowing up ammo dumps, ambushing convoys, assassinating senior Nazi officers and disabling over 40 German trains. Thanks to them, German reinforcements were held up.

Midget subs led the way

The Allies used two X-class four-man submarines to mark the outer limits of Sword and Juno Beaches. They arrived on 4th June and stayed submerged until 4.30 am on D-Day, where they used masts with lights to guide the British vessels in.

Famous faces on the beaches

The Catcher In The Rye author JD Salinger fought at D-Day in the US Signal Corps; *Star Wars* and *The Bridge On The River Kwai* actor Alec Guinness was a seaman on a D-Day landing craft; *Star Trek* actor James Doohan was an officer in the Canadian Army and one of the first onto Juno Beach; while *The Longest Day* and *Tora, Tora, Tora* director John Ford witnessed the troops land as a US Navy officer on board the USS Plunkett and filmed newsreel footage on the beach.

From the bayou to the beaches

The flat-bottomed landing crafts used in D-Day were invented by New Orleans buisnessman Andrew Higgins for navigating the Louisiana swamps. Eisenhower described him as "the man who won the war for us", and even Hitler dubbed him the "new Noah."

US troops disembark from a Higgins boat

© Ian Moores Graphics; Thinkstock

IWO JIMA

After an arduous slog through the Pacific, US Marines mounted one final assault on Japanese forces in an attempt to unlock the mainland

IWO JIMA, SOUTH PACIFIC
19 FEBRUARY 1945 – 26 MARCH 1945

WHO
3rd, 4th and 5th US Marine Divisions battled against the Imperial Japanese Army's 109th Infantry.

WHAT
The battle of Iwo Jima was an amphibious assault resulting in one of the bloodiest battles seen in the Pacific.

WHERE
Iwo Jima, a small island in the South Pacific's Volcano Island chain, 550 miles off of the main Japanese home islands.

WHY
Capturing three airfields to be used for damaged B-29 bombers returning from mainland sorties against Japan.

OUTCOME
It was the first time US casualties outnumbered their Japanese counterparts but the island was finally secured.

201
JAPAN
Motoyama
IWO JIMA
Hiraiwa Bay

Freevectormaps.com; Corbis

After the decisive naval victory at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 (the first significant triumph in the Pacific for the Allies since Japan instigated the war at Pearl Harbor in December 1941), the US Navy was afforded some time to rebuild during 1943. Ships were in need of repair and refitting, seamen and ground troops required rest, and armaments needed replenishing.

It was during this lull that Chief of Command for the US's Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester W Nimitz, refocused the tactics employed against the Japanese in the Pacific. Rather than take on the enemy direct, a campaign of island-hopping was instigated. Imperial forces had become heavily entrenched on certain key islands, making them difficult and costly targets for the Allies to capture. Instead, Nimitz's plan was to skirt around this nuclei, taking the less fortified islands in the Pacific as the US advanced towards the Japanese home islands.

The war was taking its toll on the Japanese as the US gained the upper hand in both the sea and the air. To make matters worse, Japanese ciphers were easily decoded by US intelligence, who kept Allied forces one step ahead of their enemy at all times. It was this advantage that led to the death of Marshal Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (Nimitz's opposite number) in April 1943.

After the Japanese defeat at Guadalcanal, Yamamoto decided to go on a morale-boosting inspection of the South Pacific. Word of the Japanese Commander in Chief's plans reached US Navy intelligence, leading President Franklin D Roosevelt to give the order: "Get Yamamoto". On the morning of the 18 April, the commander's plane was shot down by US forces, dealing an embarrassing blow to the Imperial Japanese Navy.

By April 1944, with momentum firmly on their side, US forces recaptured the Marshall Islands. Later the same year, it was the turn of the Mariana and Caroline Islands to fall into Allied hands, as plans for the invasion of Okinawa continued apace. The Japanese mainland was, metaphorically, in sight, with just one remaining target: Iwo Jima.

The US Navy Sixth Fleet photographed during the Battle of Iwo Jima

> "Unknown to the US forces, Kuribayashi's 109th Infantry Division was holed up in a network of over 5,000 caves and 11 miles of tunnels"

Located 650 miles south of Tokyo in the Volcanic Islands cluster, Iwo Jima was home to two Japanese airstrips (with a third under construction at the north end of the island). The US believed this small island, just eight square miles in size, to be a strategic necessity for mainland attacks. If it could be captured, the island would be used as a base for escort fighters, as well as a landing patch for damaged B-29 bombers returning from the mainland.

The Japanese had also recognised the importance of Iwo Jima and, under the command of General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, began constructing numerous inland bunkers in the summer of 1944, a noted departure from the usual beach fortifications used by the Imperial Japanese forces. US aerial and submarine reconnaissance showed the supposed scale, with 642 pillboxes, blockhouses and other gun positions identified prior to the assault.

A summer-long barrage designed to incapacitate the staunch Japanese defences ensued. For 74 days straight, US bombers pummelled this tiny blot of volcanic rock, while in the 72 hours running up to the invasion, the US Navy peppered Iwo Jima with shells, shattering the peace of this once idyllic South Pacific island.

The invasion begins

Codenamed 'Operation Detachment', the invasion proper began on 19th February 1945. The assault was tasked to the V Amphibious Marine Corps, led by General Holland 'Howlin' Mad' Smith, Commanding General for the expeditionary troops once ashore. H-Hour was set for 09:00, with the initial wave of armoured amphibian tractors coming ashore at 09:02 followed, three minutes later, by the first troop-carrying vehicles.

Spilling down the ramps, the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions (led by Major General Clifton B Cates and Major General Keller E Rockey respectively) waded through the ankle-deep volcanic ash of Iwo Jima's south-western shore unopposed. The pre-invasion bombardment appeared to have cleared the island. However, unknown to the US forces, Kuribayashi's 109th Infantry Division was holed up in a network of over 5,000 caves and 11 miles of tunnels around Iwo Jima, waiting for the landing force's shelling to cease before showing their resistance.

There were murmurs among the US troops that the Japanese forces had been wiped out as the beach remained eerily quiet – a marked departure from previous infantry battles in the Pacific where shorelines were staunchly defended. The landing plans tasked the 5th Division's 28th Regiment with taking Mount Suribachi, the 554-foot dormant volcano at the island's southern-most tip, by the end of D-Day.

Once the US Marines established a beachhead, the gradual grinding down of Japanese resistance began

Likewise, the 4th Division was scheduled to take Airfield 1 the same day. In the calm of the initial landing, both plans seemed achievable yet, as the leading battalions crested the terrace at the end of the beach, General Kuribayashi gave the order to take up weapons.

The unmistakable chatter of machine gun fire from hidden Japanese emplacements cut down the initial waves of US troops, as artillery and mortar fire now began to pound the beaches. The soft volcanic soil, churned by the pre-invasion barrage, proved difficult to move through at pace, slowing the US advance. To make matters worse, fortifications on Mount Suribachi (protected by reinforced steel doors) rained down shells on the troops below.

Despite landing some 30,000 men, progress was slow and, by the time the US advance was called to a halt at 18:00, the Marine line fell well short of their D-Day targets. Still, Mount Suribachi's north-eastern side had been surrounded by the 28th Regiment. The 5th's 27th Regiment had been able to push towards the north-western coastline but had taken heavy casualties in doing so, while the 4th Division skirted around Airfield 1's southern perimeter, securing a line towards the quarry near East Boat Basin.

During previous battles, Japanese banzai charges had caused considerable chaos throughout the night and, expecting similar attacks, US forces remained vigilant during darkness. General Kuribayashi did not believe in the usefulness of such tactics, though, feeling the banzai charge was a needless loss of life. This allowed the 3rd Battalion, 13th Marines (the artillery support for the 28th Regiment) to launch mortar and 105mm Howitzer shell attacks on Mount Suribachi during the evening of 19th February in preparation of an ascent the next morning.

Capturing Mount Suribachi

Formulated by the 28th's leader, Colonel Harry B Liversedge, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions plunged forward at 08:30 on 20th February, with the 1st Battalion remaining in reserve. With regular gunfire proving useless against the Japanese emplacements, US troops turned to their trusty flamethrowers and grenades to flush defenders out of their foxholes. However, the Japanese (thanks to their comprehensive tunnel network) soon re-manned each supposedly clear pillbox. It would be a tactic that kept US forces fighting on all fronts across the island, keeping the Marines' progress to a minimum.

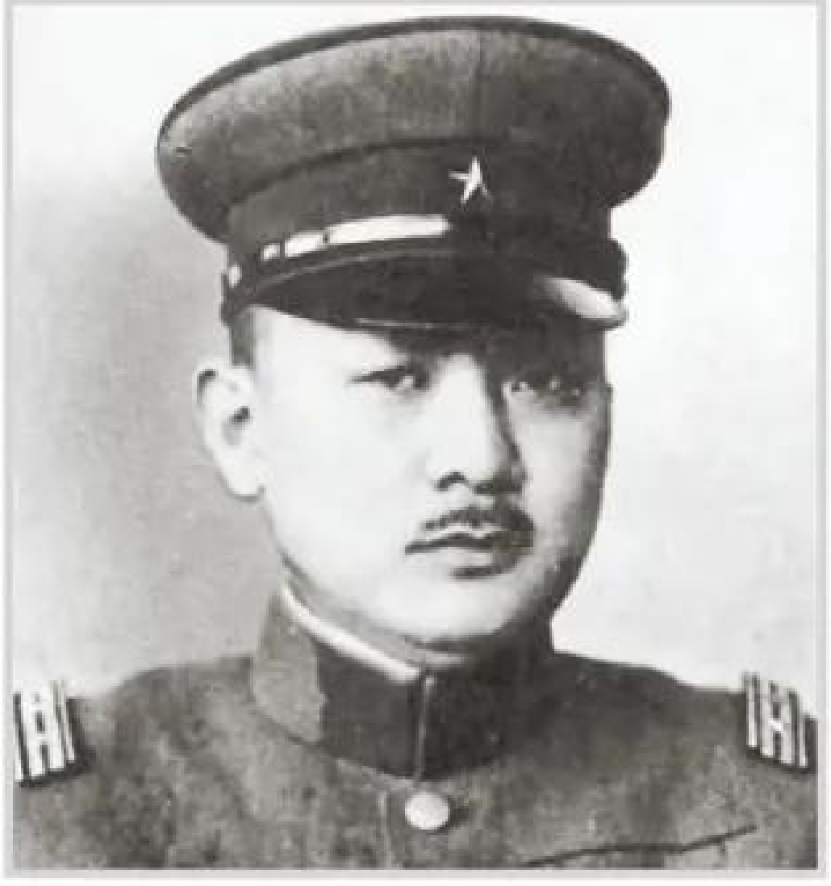
Just 200 yards of Mount Suribachi had been taken by 17:00 on D+1. The following day, Liversedge's Marines attacked again after a 40-plane airstrike. With all three battalions

OPPOSING FORCES

US LEADER
General Holland Smith
US INFANTRY
1 Amphibious Corps (3 US Marine Divisions)
TANKS
c.150 M4A3 Sherman tanks (including 8 with the Mark 1 napalm flamethrower)
GAME CHANGERS
The sheer number of men (around 70,000) thrown into battle over the course of the 36-day invasion process.

JAPAN LEADER
General Tadamichi Kuribayashi
JAPAN INFANTRY
1 Imperial Infantry Division
TANKS
22 from Lieutenant Colonel Baron Takeichi Nishi's 26th Tank Regiment
GAME CHANGERS
11 miles of tunnels, 642 pillboxes and 5,000 caves dotted around the island; tenacious infantry.

General Holland Smith



General Tadamichi Kuribayashi

heaving forward on one front, and with effective support from tanks and artillery, the 28th Regiment surged to the foot of the mountain. With the naval support covering the western side, the Marines had Suribachi surrounded by 22nd February.

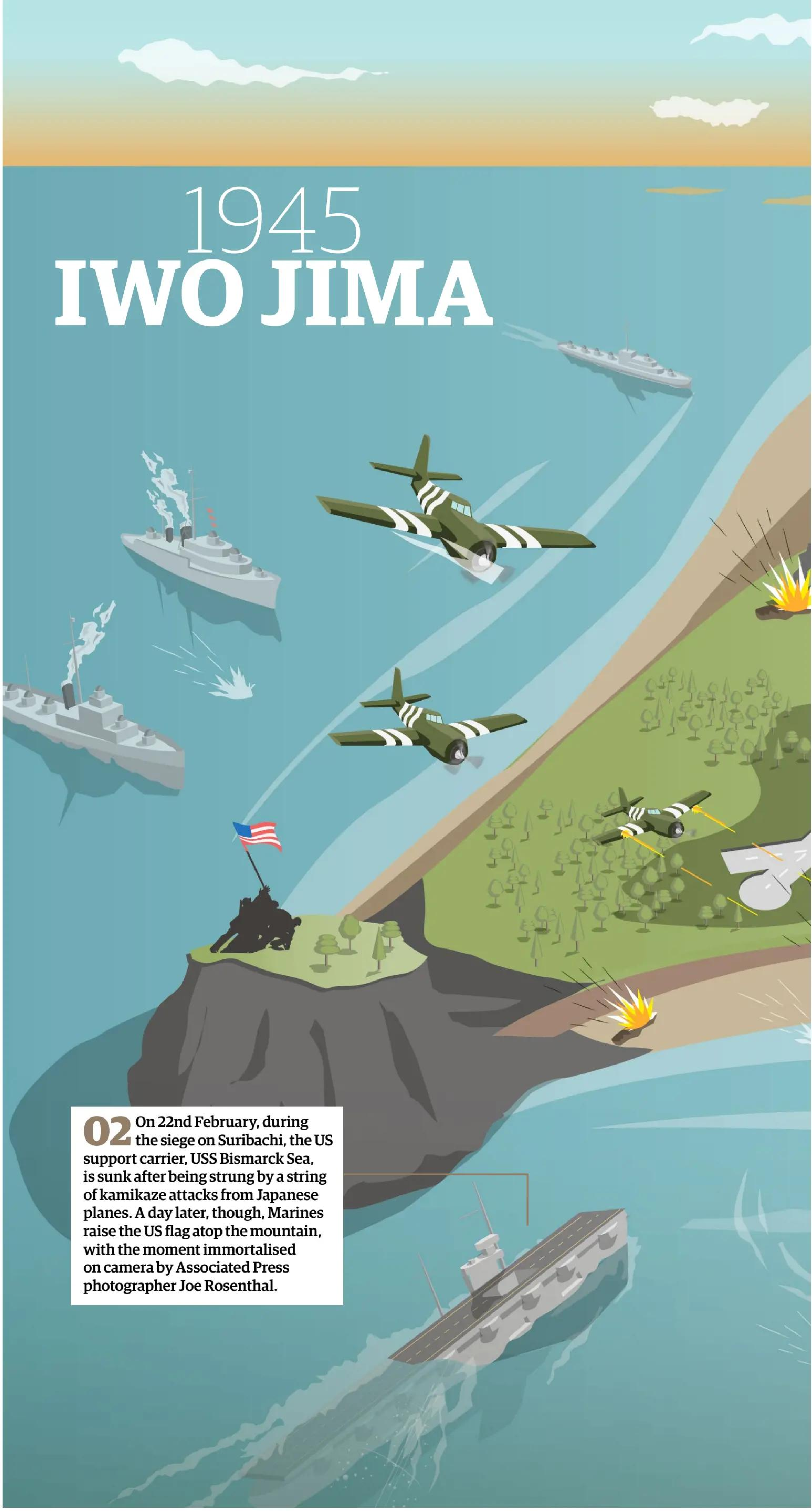
Finally, a day later, after reconnaissance from 2nd Battalion, a 40-man combat patrol was sent to the summit upon the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Chandler W Johnson. Under the command of First Lieutenant Harold G Schrier, they stormed the summit, raising a small US flag while under intense fire from the remaining Japanese troops. Later that day, a larger flag would be raised in order to boost the morale of Marines across the island.

While the 28th Marine Regiment was still on Suribachi, the 26th and 27th Regiments of the 5th Division had pushed to Iwo Jima's western coast with suicidal rapidity, beginning their journey to the island's north sector on 20th February. Meanwhile, the 4th Division's 23rd, 24th and 25th Regiments had secured 'Motoyama 1', the southern-most airfield. With the 5th Division surging the Marine line forward by around 1,000 yards, only the 23rd Regiment (fighting on the 4th Division's left flank) could keep advancing at a similar pace.

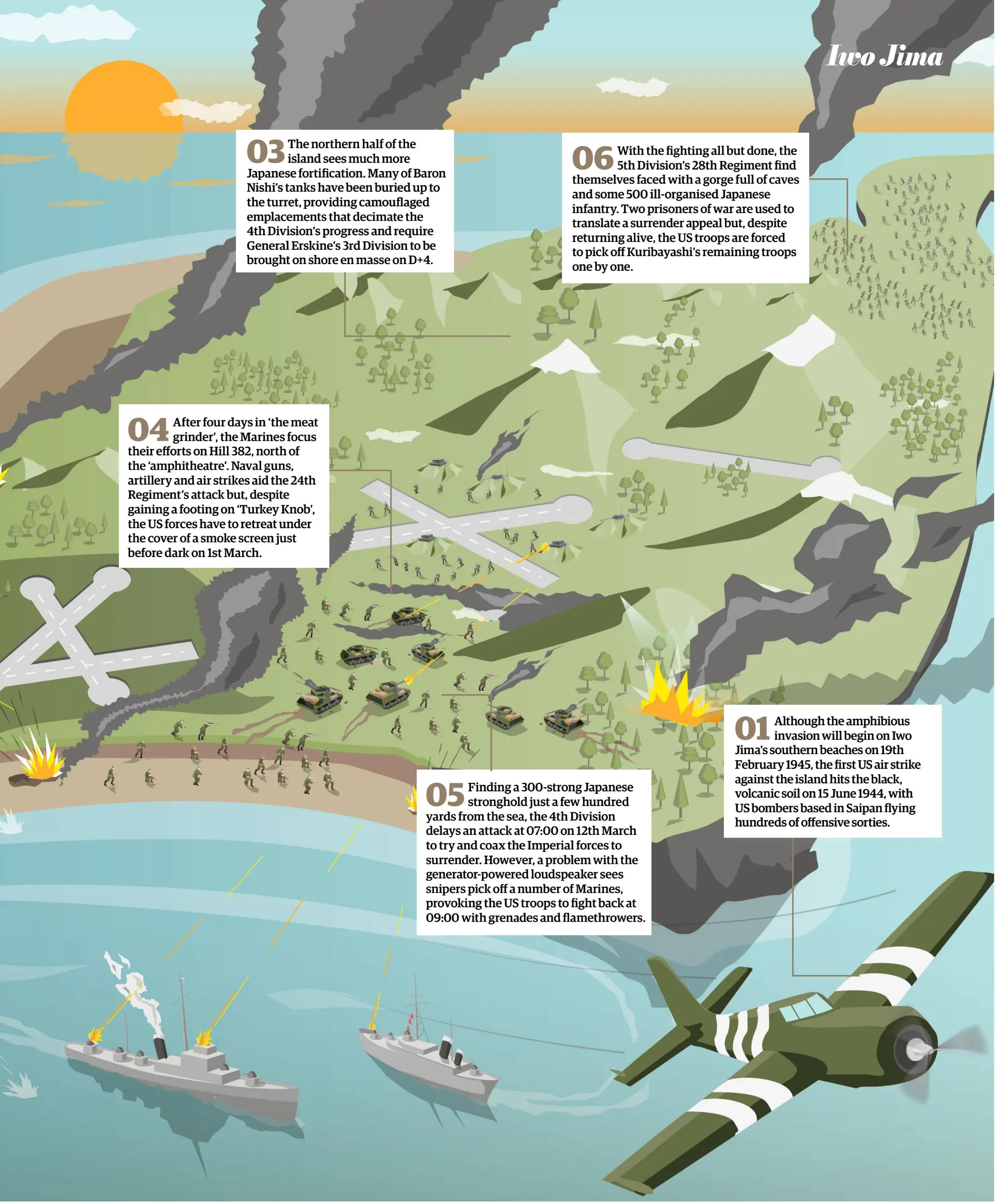
Compared with the southern half of Iwo Jima, the northern sector was extremely well fortified, thanks to the efforts of Kuribayashi's men during that summer of 1944. The US Marines were finding the rocky terrain tough to negotiate, with every cleared pillbox and fortification soon reoccupied by Japanese forces, who were putting up a staunch and bloody resistance. Any gain was seemingly met with renewed fire from the shellproof artillery emplacements and well-hidden tanks.

To aid the 4th Division's charge, General Cates called the 21st Regiment of the 3rd Division ashore on 21 February. However, with Japanese forces pinning down the 25th Regiment on the eastern shores, the beach was congested, forcing the 3rd Division's relief through the centre of the Marine Corps line in place of the 23rd Regiment. By the morning of the 22nd, frontline units were beginning to be relieved, with the fresh Marine forces able to grind out short territorial gains. However, Kuribayashi's men were alert to the fresh threat, pinning down units that were about to be replaced.

On D+4, V Marine Corps' Major General Harry Schmidt came ashore to survey the damage, ordering an attack the following morning. 24th February dawned with tanks thrusting through towards the second airfield, supported by the 21st Regiment. The 5th Division's tanks flanked Motoyama 2's western edge, while the 4th Division armour edged forward on the airstrip's east perimeter. Aided by a 76-minute naval bombardment, the US Marines were advancing once again.



02 **On 22nd February, during the siege on Suribachi, the US support carrier, USS Bismarck Sea, is sunk after being strung by a string of kamikaze attacks from Japanese planes. A day later, though, Marines raise the US flag atop the mountain, with the moment immortalised on camera by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal.**



01 Although the amphibious invasion will begin on Iwo Jima's southern beaches on 19th February 1945, the first US air strike against the island hits the black, volcanic soil on 15 June 1944, with US bombers based in Saipan flying hundreds of offensive sorties.

03 The northern half of the island sees much more Japanese fortification. Many of Baron Nishi's tanks have been buried up to the turret, providing camouflaged emplacements that decimate the 4th Division's progress and require General Erskine's 3rd Division to be brought on shore en masse on D+4.

04 After four days in 'the meat grinder', the Marines focus their efforts on Hill 382, north of the 'amphitheatre'. Naval guns, artillery and air strikes aid the 24th Regiment's attack but, despite gaining a footing on 'Turkey Knob', the US forces have to retreat under the cover of a smoke screen just before dark on 1st March.

05 Finding a 300-strong Japanese stronghold just a few hundred yards from the sea, the 4th Division delays an attack at 07:00 on 12th March to try and coax the Imperial forces to surrender. However, a problem with the generator-powered loudspeaker sees snipers pick off a number of Marines, provoking the US troops to fight back at 09:00 with grenades and flamethrowers.

06 With the fighting all but done, the 5th Division's 28th Regiment find themselves faced with a gorge full of caves and some 500 ill-organised Japanese infantry. Two prisoners of war are used to translate a surrender appeal but, despite returning alive, the US troops are forced to pick off Kuribayashi's remaining troops one by one.

> "The US Marines were finding the rocky terrain tough to negotiate, with every cleared pillbox and fortification soon reoccupied by Japanese forces who were putting up a staunch and bloody resistance"

A US Marine crouches near the corpse of a Japanese officer

The original US flag raised on the top of Mount Suribachi once it had been taken

Into the meat grinder

The same day, the remaining regiments of Major General Graves B Erskine's 3rd Division were committed to Iwo Jima. The veteran division was tasked with advancing through the supposedly flat centre line of the island, going head-on into Kuribayashi's main defensive line on 25th February. With flame-throwing tanks incinerating the enemy (and 50 per cent of the corps' artillery missions aiding the 3rd Division) three days of toil finally paid off late on 27th February.

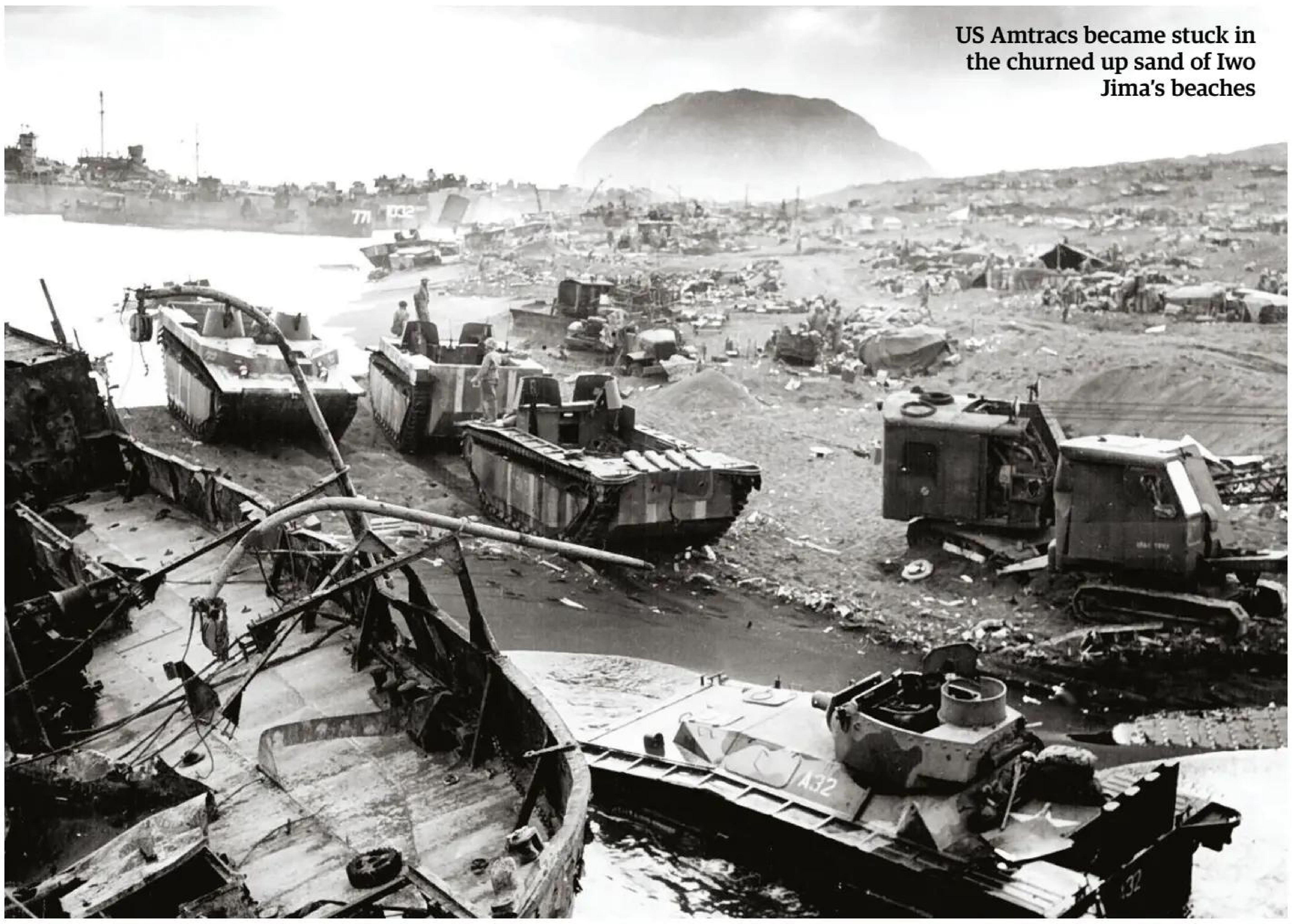
The Japanese line cracked, and the 9th Regiment found itself controlling two hills north of the second airfield, while the following day, the 21st Regiment stormed through the remnants of Motoyama village to seize two hills commanding a view over the unfinished airfield three. Elsewhere, the 5th Division had secured 'Hill 362A' after initial resistance from the Japanese proved deadly. 224 of the Division's Marines were killed or wounded on 1st March, but the hill's access to Nishi Ridge on the north-west edge of the island was too important for them to bypass.

While many hills had fallen with relative ease, Hill 382 on the eastern edge of the island was proving a more difficult proposition for the 4th Division. Honeycombed with Kuribayashi's tunnels, the hill's approach was guarded by hidden tanks, while the crest had been fortified into a huge artillery-proof bunker.

South of the hill was a series of ridges, topped by 'Turkey Knob', while further south of this massive rock was a natural bowl known as the 'Amphitheatre'. The fighting here was bloody, with 1st March the fourth day that the division's Marines had hurled themselves at the Japanese forces. Such was the relentlessness of this quadrant, it became known as the 'meat grinder'. It wasn't until 10th March that the Japanese defenders around 'Turkey Knob' were eliminated. Naval fire, carrier air strikes, heavy shelling and many Marine lives were needed before Hill 382 finally fell into US hands.

In this time, the 5th Division's 26th Regiment had succeeded in securing 'Hill 362B' on 3rd March, before the 3rd Division readied itself for the assault on 'Hill 362C' four days later. Under cover of darkness (a departure from the usual US tactics in the Pacific), General Erskine's men advanced beyond the unsuspecting Japanese forces. It was a blow for the General Kuribayashi, yet his men remained to resist strongly in their lasting areas of occupation.

Unfortunately for Imperial Japan, their attacks were becoming increasingly unco-ordinated, allowing patrols from the 3rd Marine Division to reach the northern coast by 9th March. The following evening, there was only one final pocket of Japanese resistance left in the division's sector, although the tunnels underneath the ground gave many more fanatical infantry a hiding place.


US Amtracs became stuck in the churned up sand of Iwo Jima's beaches

In the eastern sector, home of the 4th Division, Japanese troops launched a counterattack on 8th March. Under the cover of heavy artillery fire, the men attacked the Marine forces, worming their way through the 23rd and 24th Regiment's lines. Some attacked with the blood-curdling banzai cry, though many chose a stealthier approach, attempting to impersonate wounded US soldiers. Despite the counterattack's ingenuity, it was an ultimately hopeless effort that saw 650 Japanese killed by noon the following day. The end result was that, on 10th March, the Turkey Knob/Amphitheatre salient was completely destroyed as Marine forces pushed Kuribayashi's defences right back to the northern coast.

Clearing up the north

For the remainder of Operation Detachment, each Marine division would be faced with isolated pockets of resistance dotted around Iwo Jima. The 3rd Division was tasked with the grim job of destroying a heavily fortified resistance south-west of Hill 362C (eventually achieved on 16th March), while the 4th Division focused on an enemy stronghold between East Boat Basin and Tachiiwa Point.

Across the island, 5th Division bore down on Japanese forces around Kitano Point, the last point of defence in the Iwo Jima campaign. Joined by two battalions of the 3rd Division's 21st Regiment, the final Marine drive began on 11th March with naval shelling and airstrikes. The US artillery again had little impact, though, making initial progress painstaking.

Despite being ravaged since the initial landing on 19th February, the 5th Division carved through 1,000 yards between 14-15th March, as many of the Japanese troops met a fiery end at the hands of the Marines' flame-throwing tanks. The following day, the 21st Regiment flanked the Japanese on the right, providing the US forces with two attack fronts to decimate the remaining Imperial forces.

By 25th March, organised enemy resistance was declared over. However, Kuribayashi's men had one final assault up their sleeve. In the vicinity of Motoyama 2, some 300 men assembled that evening. On the morning of the 26th March 1945, they stormed the US camp, killing sleeping Marines until a defensive line was formed by the Americans as dawn broke, sending the remaining Japanese into hiding. After 36 days, the Battle of Iwo Jima became a manhunt, with at least 223 Japanese soldiers hunted and killed. General Kuribayashi was rumoured to have been among those slain, bringing to an end a bloody conflict that saw more than 70,000 Marines deployed.

Of the 20,060 Japanese troops on the island, only 216 were ever captured, with roughly 300 left hiding in the tunnels for the remainder of the war. On the US side, 5,931 Marines were killed, with a further 17,372 injured – the only time in the Pacific theatre that American casualties outnumbered those of the Japanese. General Holland Smith had "thrown human flesh against reinforced concrete" in taking Iwo Jima. Yet, in the ensuing aerial war against the Japanese mainland, over 2,200 heavy bombers made unscheduled landings on the island's airstrips, saving 24,761 US airmen from potential disaster in the process.

Iwo Jima was a grim yet inspirational victory for the Americans that demoralised their enemy. Mainland Japan had never seemed closer to the United States. Victory in the Pacific was in sight.

ENDGAME

THE FALL OF THE THIRD REICH

The Battle of Berlin between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia was history's bloodiest showdown, and its shockwaves echoed for decades...

In October 1941, four months after the Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union, Adolf Hitler stood before a packed auditorium at the Sportpalast, Berlin. The largest meeting hall in the city, with some 14,000 spectators, was festooned with swastika banners and further 'Nazified' by way of a dramatically-lit, 20-metre-wide theatre prop in the shape of a golden eagle. It hovered over Der Führer, seemingly radiating power and purity. This was Hitler's altar and before it he delivered the following sermon.

"Today, I can say that the enemy is broken and will never rise again! Her power had been assembled against Europe, and would have been a second storm of Genghis Khan. That this danger has been averted, we owe to the bravery, endurance and sacrifice of the German soldier!" His histrionic version of events was met with fanatical applause. His enemy, though, was far from broken.

By May 1945, the "Sieg Heils" that had echoed around that room had been replaced by the chilling war cries of Soviet infantrymen as they smashed their way into Hitler's sacred temple and onto the very stage he had preached from. "Ura!" they screamed as they hunted down the last of his disciples holding out in the building, going about their murderous work with bayonet, grenade and rifle butt. The Red Army wanted vengeance for the bloodletting at Stalingrad.

The battle ended with the Nazi swastika flag on the Reichstag roof being replaced by the Soviet hammer and sickle

For the soldiers of the Red Army that stage, more so even than the Reichstag, symbolised Nazi power. Its capture meant not just the end of the war but also the death of National Socialism – the ideology that had been responsible for the slaughter of 27 million Russian citizens. For the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, however, the real prize was the capture of the prestigious German capital itself.

The idea that the Soviets might seize Berlin and bring an end to World War II in Europe had become a distinct possibility by the start of 1945. The success of the Red Army's January offensive had seen it smash through 500 kilometres (300 miles) of German-held territory in just 20 days. By 5th February, its troops began to cross the Oder river, the last great natural barrier before Berlin. Once on the other side, however, and just 60 kilometres (37 miles) from Hitler's capital, they stopped.

The Soviet advance had been so rapid and the fighting so intense, that the successes had left the Red Army short of ammunition and fuel. It would take more than two months of resupply and reinforcement before it was ready for its final push of the war.

The pause in slaughter gave the Nazis time to reorganise, too. Reserve units were cobbled together from whatever troops were left and whichever civilians could be press-ganged into service. Wounded soldiers were ordered from their hospital beds and army clerks sent to combat units, while men as old as 60 and boys as young as 13 were drafted into the newly-formed Volkssturm militias. Those who refused were executed.

In the end, the Nazi high command managed to sweep together about 760,000 troops. Many were sent to join the 9th Army at Seelow Heights, the highlands east of Berlin, to help build elaborate defences there. In the plains before them as these troops worked, the Soviets gathered together an army of 2.5 million men, more than 6,000 tanks and 40,000 artillery pieces. The clock was ticking on what would be the bloodiest showdown in history. By the time Berlin fell, hundreds of thousands of people lay dead.

British prime minister Winston Churchill also wanted to capitalise on this brief pause. He saw it as an opportunity for the West to seize both the initiative and Berlin itself. By late March, the Western Allies had crossed the Rhine, and were themselves just 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the city. "If the Russians take Berlin," Churchill warned US President Franklin D Roosevelt on 1st April, "may this not lead to grave and formidable difficulties in the future?"

Churchill, as it would transpire, was very much focused on the future and what a post-war map of Europe should look like. He urged

Hitler's mesmeric speeches were heightened by the theatricality of their setting. His followers frequently responded rapturously

"The Soviet advance had been so rapid and the fighting so intense, that the successes had left the Red Army short of ammunition and fuel"

The final offensive against Berlin opened with a bombardment of the Seelow Heights by some 9,000 Russian guns

Hitler's last line of defence

The boy fanatics and citizen militia of Berlin's Volkssturm

Foundation

By the end of 1944 the German war machine was running on empty, its manpower almost spent. Hitler ordered all German men aged between 16 and 60 to join Volkssturm units and with the regular army disgraced by defeat, overall command was given to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, who announced the birth of the "People's Storm" over the radio waves on 18th October while a studio audience sang "Volk ans Gewehr!" – "People to Arms!"

Newly mobilised members of the Volkssturm and their weapons

Recruitment

With most adult men already serving in the Wehrmacht, most of the total six million-strong Volkssturm were old men - with 1.4 million physically unfit and suitable only for guard duty. Approximately 600,000 were 16-19 year-old members of the Hitler Youth, with some volunteers as young as 10. Even the women of the Nazi Women's League were drafted in to provide rear-echelon support. On 23rd March 1945, the women were issued firearms. Of Berlin's 41,000 defenders, 24,000 of them were Volkssturm with 18,000 of that number part of the 'Clausewitz Levy' mobilised from essential war workers.

Training

Volkssturm recruits were rushed through a 48-hour training programme covering the use of rifle, Panzerfaust and Panzerschreck anti-tank weapon, and grenades. If the situation warranted it they were also schooled in the use of pistol, sub-machine gun and landmine.

Equipment

Units assigned to guard duty were expected to use hunting rifles or weapons taken from the enemy, but even combat units found supplies hard to come by and some were only issued a trench spade by way of self-defence. In Berlin, supplies were so scarce that units were issued with Italian or Danish rifles and only a couple of rounds each. Only single-shot Panzerfaust rocket launchers seemed plentiful.

Uniform

An order issued on 1st December 1944 required recruits provide their own, resulting in a mixture of paramilitary, Hitlerjugend, police and even old First World War uniforms, but many had to make-up with cast-offs, captured British fatigues or simply civilian clothes. All insignia had to be removed except Volkssturm rank pips on the collar and the black Volkssturm armband on the upper left sleeve. The lack of a consistent uniform led to many facing summary execution as guerrillas by the Red Army.

Leadership

Command roles in the Volkssturm were often held by senior members of the Hitler Youth, civilian police and non-combat paramilitary groups such as the motoring association NSKK, the flying club NSFK and military engineering/slave labour force Organisation Todt. The Berlin District Volkssturm was under the direct command of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels who was also Gauleiter, or head, of the regional branch of the Nazi Party.

Effectiveness

While many Volkssturm units were as farcical as you'd expect from such an ad hoc collection of OAPs and inexperienced ideologues, some of them - such as the Siemensstadt Volkssturm Battalion 3/115 fighting in the Eastern suburbs of the city – held out until the surrender. The Hitlerjugend – representing a generation that had known only National Socialism – fought with a level of zeal that terrified even battle-hardened soldaten, and one Russian account describes a column of 400 Hitlerjugend marching down Kolonnenstrasse toward them as if they were on parade. The stupefied 5th Shock Army paused briefly before opening fire. Hitlerjungend 'tank-hunting units' armed with Panzerfausts terrorised the Soviet advance through the Wilmersdorf District, while a counter-attack launched from the Ruhleben U-Bahn saw 1,000 German troops reinforced by 2,000 Hitlerjugend – many completely unarmed – that actually drove back the advance of the 55 Guards Tank Brigade.

Perhaps the most infamous tribute to their tragic fanaticism was on 23rd April, when Volkssturm battalions made up entirely of Hitler Youth tried to hold the Pichelsdorf bridges across the Havel River for a relief army that never arrived – one of the many phantoms commanded by Germany's ailing despot as he raged in his bunker. 5,000 boys in adult uniforms and oversized helmets fought for five days against the Red Army advance, with 4,500 of them killed or wounded.

Key players

Thousands died as Berlin fell, many believing their cause was a noble one. These are the men they followed

Georgy Zhukov

USSR
1896-1974

The key Soviet commander, having driven the Germans from Moscow, defeated them at Stalingrad and routed them at Kursk, Zhukov was known as 'the man who never lost a battle'. While he did capture Berlin, his tactics cost many casualties.

Gotthard Heinrici

Nazi Germany
1886-1971

Considered the best defensive tactician in the Wehrmacht, Heinrici managed to delay the Soviet advance at Seelow despite overwhelming odds. A non-Nazi, he also refused to carry out Hitler's more suicidal orders.

Ivan Konev

USSR
1897-1973

As commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Konev was encouraged by Stalin – who admired his ruthlessness – to 'race' Zhukov to Berlin. Attacking from the south, his forces were also the first to link up with advancing US troops.

Helmuth Weidling

Nazi Germany
1891-1955

On 22 April, Hitler ordered Weidling's execution. The next day he appointed him commander of Berlin's defence. On learning of his promotion, Weidling said: "I'd rather have been shot."

the Americans to take the city. The US high command, though, under General Dwight D Eisenhower, wasn't keen. The mauling his troops had taken during the Battle of the Bulge that winter, when Hitler had launched his final counter-offensive in the west, had left him wary. When Eisenhower asked what casualties he could expect if he attacked Berlin, one of his generals told him 100,000. It was an unthinkable figure. Had it transpired, it would have constituted one-fifth of all US casualties for the entire war. Eisenhower instead deferred to Stalin, who told him that Berlin was strategically unimportant and that his efforts would be better focused on preventing the Nazis from regrouping in the south. It was advice that Eisenhower was quite happy to take.

Yet neither Stalin nor Churchill was being transparent. It had already been agreed at February's Yalta Conference that when the Nazi regime toppled, the Allies would divvy up Berlin between them. So why then did it matter to Churchill who took the city first? Similarly, if Berlin was strategically unimportant, why was Stalin so keen for the USSR to single-handedly suffer such high casualties capturing it? After all, he'd spent much of the war prior to D-Day haranguing his allies for not dying enough while Russia was being bled white. Surely now was the time for them to make up for that in this common crusade against fascism? Militarily it would have made more sense, too - a ready-made pincer movement that would save one side from having to surround the city on its own. The answer to these questions lies in what would appear to be a giant game of chess being played out between Churchill and Stalin, only with real-life pawns and potentially catastrophic consequences on the world stage.

At the start of April, Churchill, fixing his gaze well beyond Hitler's imminent demise, ordered the drafting of Operation Unthinkable. Documents declassified in 1998 reveal that a month before the end of hostilities in Europe, Churchill was plotting a war against the Soviet Union. In his secret plan, 47 British and US divisions were to launch a surprise attack against the Soviets on 1st July 1945. Moreover, this offensive was to be supported by ten German divisions with the intent not merely of driving the Soviets out of Eastern Europe, but of invading the USSR itself. According to official documents, the aim was to seize "such vast areas of Metropolitan Russia that the war-making capacity of that country would be [rendered] impossible."

Did Stalin know what Churchill was up to? Almost certainly. By 1945, the Soviets had so successfully infiltrated British intelligence that notorious double agents like Kim Philby and Guy Burgess had been feeding the Kremlin secrets for years. It also explains Stalin's desire to flood Berlin and its surrounding area with his troops. Control Berlin, as Karl Marx once pointed out, and you control Europe. And if you're Joseph Stalin,

1 Zhukov launches Seelow Heights offensive

16th April, 3am

After more than two months of intensive preparation, the 1st Belorussian Front under Marshal Zhukov attacks the well-fortified German position at Seelow Heights. The objective is taken after three days of fierce fighting. It proves to be Germany's last significant position of organised resistance to her inevitable defeat.

2 Zhukov reaches the outskirts of Berlin

20th April, 8pm

After having raced 60km (37mi) from Seelow to the eastern edge of Berlin, Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front announces its arrival with an artillery barrage that continues until the city falls two weeks later.

3 The Battle of Halbe

24th April, 10am

The 9th Army, escaping from Marshal Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front, is pinned down by SS troops after being mistaken for a Soviet column. The hold-up allows Konev to envelop them. Over the next few days, the 9th Army is annihilated.

4 Berlin encircled

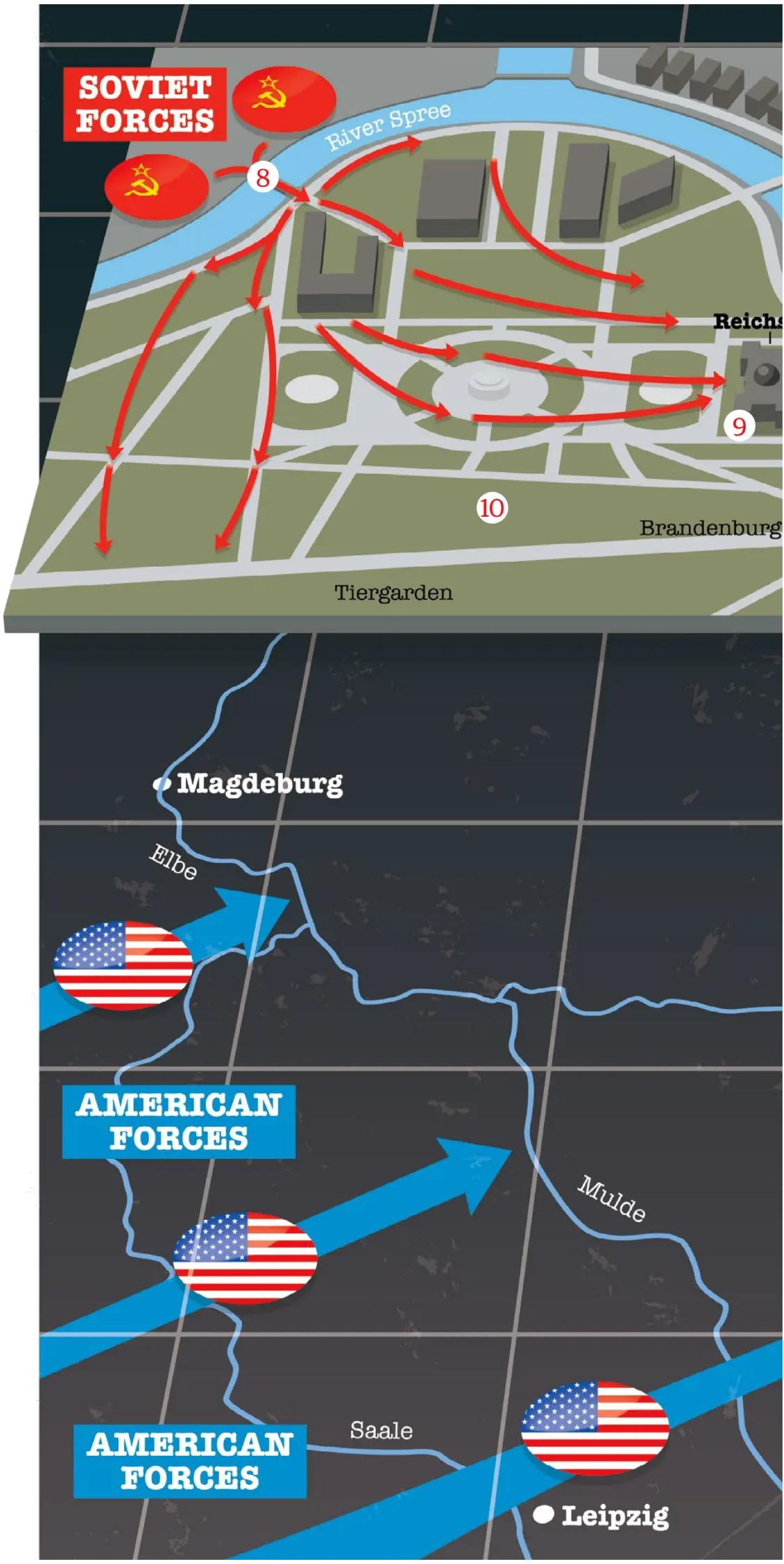
24th April, 6pm

Forward elements of Marshal Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front link up with men from Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front, to the west of Berlin. With Marshal Rokossovsky's 2nd Belorussian Front pushing down on it from the north, the Nazi capital finds itself completely surrounded.

5 Soviet and US troops meet

25th April, 4pm

Elements of Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front make contact with men from the US 69th Infantry Division at Torgau on the Elbe, 135km southwest of Berlin.



6 Hitler's bunker is shelled

27th April, 10am

Soviet artillerymen on Schlesingerstrasse are ordered to fire on the Reichstag; they comply even though Berlin's so engulfed by flames they can't see it. After hitting their own troops, they switch targets to the Reich Chancellery, where Hitler's bunker is located.

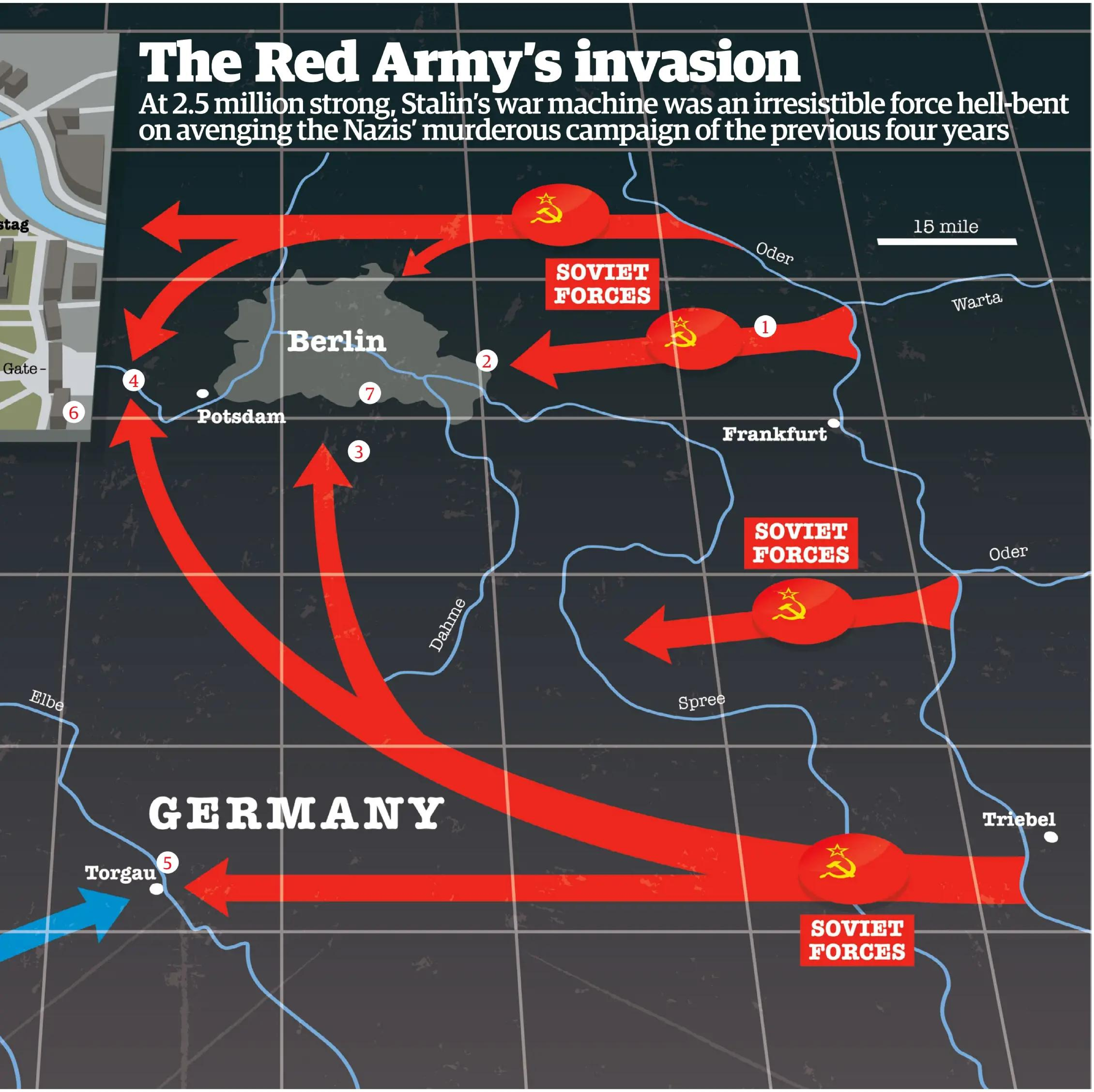
7 The capture of Tempelhof Airfield

28th April, 11am

With much of Berlin's southern suburbs now in Soviet hands, Tempelhof airport is seized. With the city completely surrounded, Hitler's last exit route has been closed off. He now knows his fate lies with either death or capture in Berlin.

The Red Army's invasion

At 2.5 million strong, Stalin's war machine was an irresistible force hell-bent on avenging the Nazis' murderous campaign of the previous four years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Spree
Elbe
GERMANY
Triebel
Torgau
SOVIET FORCES

8 The capture of the Moltke Bridge

28th April, 5pm

This last intact crossing over the River Spree was the gateway into central Berlin. About 5,000 German troops barricaded it at both ends and wired it up for demolition. Soviet forces assault the bridge at dusk and capture it.

9 The capture of the Reichstag building

30th April, 10.40pm

After two days of fighting, Soviet forces finally place their flag atop the Reichstag in time for May Day, as ordered by Stalin. By 1st May, the Reichstag is in Soviet hands, and news of Hitler's suicide prompts the German surrender.

10 Kroll Opera House is cleared

30th April, 11.30am

Soviet infantrymen just 800 metres from the Reichstag are attacked from the rear by SS diehards in the Kroll Opera House. The building is taken after several hours of bitter hand-to-hand fighting.

you also put an awful lot of territory between your borders and any newly-drawn battle lines.

Whatever the truth, there's little doubt that Roosevelt's sudden death on 12th April prompted Stalin to finally attack. In Roosevelt he'd had an ally he could trust. His replacement, Harry S Truman, offered no such assurances and, rather than wait to be stabbed in the back by those who'd soon be his enemy, Stalin acted decisively. The battle for Berlin began four days later.

In the early hours of 16th April, Soviet propaganda officers announced in German over loud speakers that the assault on Seelow was imminent. The message that drifted across no man's land was designed to terrorise the Germans waiting there into putting their hands up. But for troops in those trenches and dugouts, surrender was not an option. The SS men who held guns to their backs made sure of that.

Shortly after this, at 3am, 9,000 guns smashed half a million artillery shells into the German line. The bombardment lasted 35 minutes. When it ended, there was a chilling silence. Then the earth began to shake as 3,000 tanks rattled and clanged their way towards the German position, among them tens of thousands of Soviet infantrymen ready for a fight.

The Russians expected to take Seelow Heights within hours, but its German commander General Gotthard Heinrici, had prepared well. Anticipating the bombardment, he'd pulled his troops back for its duration. Casualties had been minimal and they now raced back to their positions. Prior to the assault, he'd also ordered engineers to open a dam on the Oder river, flooding the land the Soviets now struggled to cross as anti-tank fire thundered down on them. The Soviet commander, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, had also made a critical error. Hoping to dazzle the German defenders, he'd lit his men's advance with 143 high-powered searchlights. His bombardment, however, had created an enormous wall of smoke that their beams couldn't penetrate and instead bounced back from, blinding his own troops and silhouetting them in the glare. The Germans couldn't have hoped for better targets to aim at. By dawn the Soviet advance had stalled.

Countdown to the end

A blow-by-blow account of how the Red Army dragged Hitler's Third Reich to the execution block and finally killed it off

16th April, 3am

The Battle of Berlin Begins

The Red Army begins its assault on the German army's last major defensive line at Seelow Heights, 60km west of Berlin. It falls just three days later.

20th April, 8pm

Bombardment of Berlin begins

It's Hitler's 56th birthday. He emerges from the Führerbunker for the last time to award medals to boy soldiers. On the same evening, the Soviet bombardment begins.

21st April, 11am

First Counter-Attack Ordered

Hitler orders a force under General Steiner to repel the encircling Soviets. When it fails, Hitler announces that he's going to kill himself.

23rd April, 2pm

General Weidling Appointed

With the Soviets closing in on all sides, Hitler appoints Artillery General Helmuth Weidling commander of the Berlin Defence Area.

24th April, 10am

Retreating 9th Army Surrounded

General Busse's 9th Army, heading to Berlin after withdrawing from Seelow Heights, is encircled at Halbe. Trapped, the Soviets destroy it.

24th April, 9pm

Second Counter-Attack

General Wenck's 12th Army is pulled off the line facing US troops and sent to relieve the encircled 9th Army. It proves impossible.

> "Control Berlin, as Karl Marx once pointed out, and you control Europe"

DEUTSCHER VOLKSSTURM
WEHRMACHT

Above: As the siege went on and the street fighting became more intense, Berlin's once beautiful city streets were shattered by flames and shellfire

Right and inset above: The Volkssturm militias, mostly made up of old men and schoolboys, were hastily trained and poorly equipped. Casualty rates reflected this

26th April, dawn

The Onslaught Arrives

About half a million Soviet troops swarm into Berlin from all directions. Fierce street fighting starts to see almost every building damaged or destroyed.

Walter Doenicke lies dead next to a portrait of Hitler

28th April, 3pm

Himmler Discusses Surrender

Hitler learns that his most trusted ally, Himmler, has approached the Western Allies to discuss peace terms. Hitler declares him a traitor.

29th April, 5pm

Moltke Bridge is Captured

Demolition charges fail to properly destroy the last bridge over the Spree. It falls into Soviet hands, taking access to central Berlin with it.

30th April, 10am

Weidling's Last Report

Weidling informs Hitler that the Soviets are just metres from his bunker, that the Reichstag is under fire and the Nazi ammunition is very nearly exhausted.

30th April, 3.30pm

Hitler's Suicide

Hitler kills himself in the Führerbunker by simultaneously biting into a deadly cyanide capsule and shooting himself in the head. His remains are later cremated by his bodyguards.

It would take Zhukov three days to dislodge Heinrici's defenders, and even then only after his great rival Marshal Ivan Konev began to outflank the Germans from the south. The defensive position at Seelow fell on 19th April. About 12,000 of its defenders had been killed and the rest now fled. It had cost the Soviets more than double that and nearly 750 tanks, but there was now nothing left between them and Stalin's ultimate prize – Berlin.

Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front raced towards the city from the east, and by 20th April was on its outskirts. Zhukov marked what was to be Hitler's final birthday by launching a huge artillery barrage against the city. Cowering in his Führerbunker, Der Fuhrer, by now deranged and deluded, ranted wide-eyed about how the German people had betrayed him. If he was going to die, he shrieked, then they would die with him. The war was lost, and Hitler knew it, but he'd make Berlin's three million inhabitants suffer terribly. The following day Zhukov's ground troops began their assault.

To the south, meanwhile, Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front was also making rapid progress. It'd broken into open country and was chasing what was left of the German 9th Army. By now, these German troops, who'd fought so bravely at Seelow, were slowly being encircled. They fled towards Berlin where there was still an opening in the front but, on 24th April, were halted at the town of Halbe. Not by Russians, however, but by SS troops holding the line there.

Mistaking the approaching Germans for a Soviet column, the SS opened up on them. The men from the 9th scurried for cover, and by the time the SS realised their mistake, Konev's troops were swarming all over them, assaulting the SS defences. The 9th were trapped between the two sides and when fighting eased six days later, 60,000 Germans lay dead, some by the hands of the comrades they were supposed to defend.

> "The siege that would engulf the city for the next two weeks reduced the once splendid capital to the inner circle of hell"

Surrender and peace

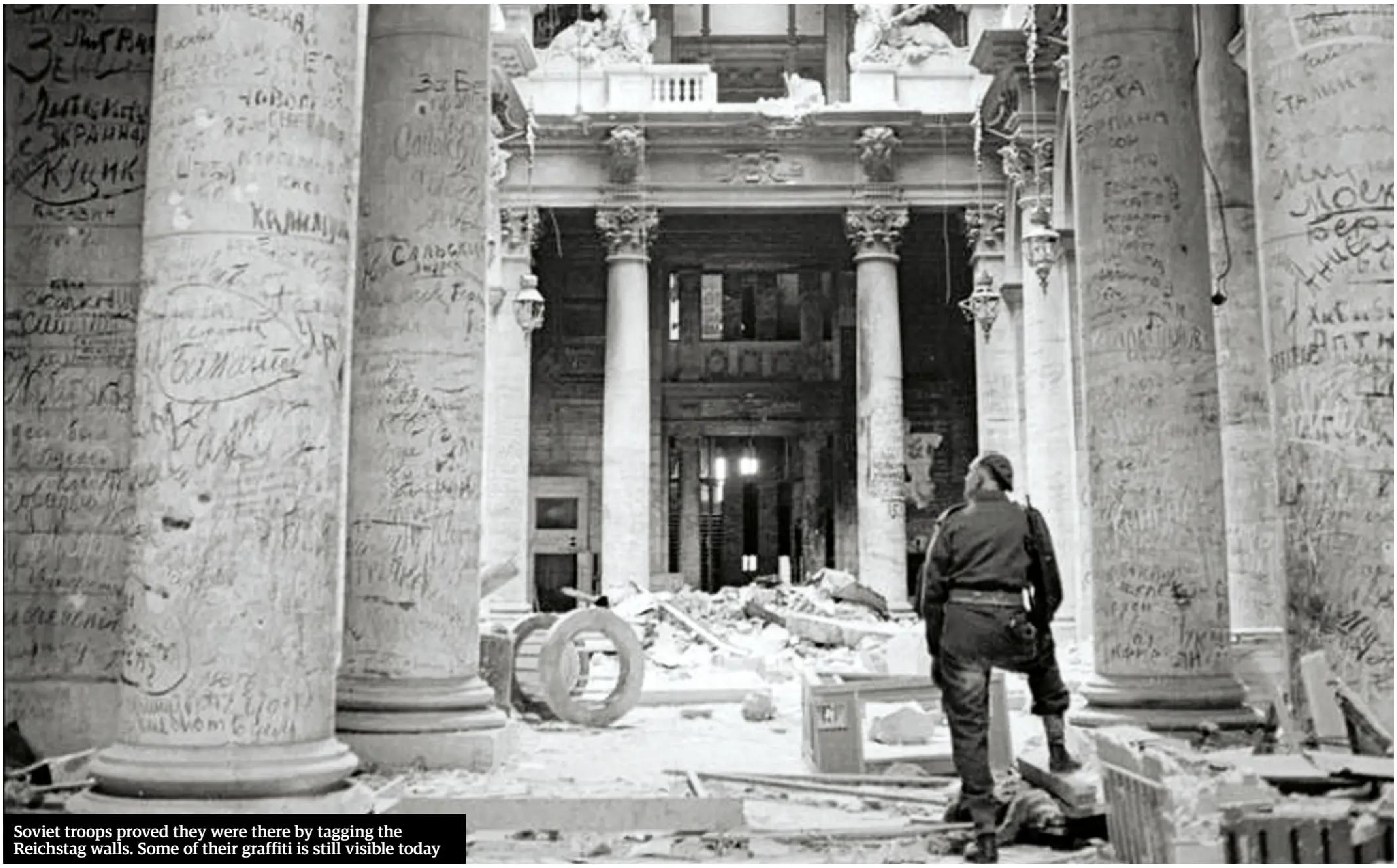
After triggering the most devastating war in history, Germany finally signed a peace settlement with the Allies

Although Weidling surrendered Berlin to the Russians on 2nd May, effectively ending hostilities, Germany's official surrender didn't take place until six days later, on 8th May 1945, at a ceremony in the Soviet Military Administration in Berlin-Karlshorst.

This was actually the second act of surrender the German authorities signed. The first at the Western Allies HQ in France the day before was deemed unacceptable to the Soviets, who argued that the surrender should take place at the seat of the German government. The terms of both documents, however, were the same – the surrender was to be unconditional, although Germany could expect to be treated a lot better than she had been in 1918.

Various German leaders, Himmler included, had earlier made several attempts to surrender conditionally to the Western Allies. But the condition was always the same – that the regime be allowed to continue its fight against the Soviet Union. To his credit Eisenhower refused to accept any of them. Like Roosevelt, he was a man of his word and he insisted Germany surrender to all the Allies – the USSR included – so that the war that had ravaged Europe for six long years could finally be brought to a close.

With nobody to bury the dead, corpses crowded the streets. About 400,000 people died during fighting in the city alone



Soviet troops proved they were there by tagging the Reichstag walls. Some of their graffiti is still visible today

The rest of the 1st Ukrainian Front swept forward, driving relentlessly towards Berlin. By nightfall it had made contact with Zhukov's troops west of the capital. With the 2nd Belorussian Front hemming the city in from the north, Berlin was now surrounded.

Hitler attempted a counter-offensive. He ordered the German 12th Army facing US troops in the west to smash through the Russian lines, link with the beleaguered 9th and drive northward to Berlin. It was a wild gamble that had no chance of success. Halted 32 kilometres (20 miles) from the city, the 12th was soon sent back by overwhelming firepower.

The Russians now tightened the noose, and the siege that would engulf the city for the next two weeks reduced the once splendid capital to the inner circle of hell. The air became poisoned with the stench of burning buildings and rotting flesh, the streets busy with twisted corpses, the cellars and subways filled with untreated wounded. As the food ran out and the water supply dwindled, those in uniform ran amok. The civilian population was terrorised by both the Russians – who hunted in packs for the city's females, raping whoever they found regardless of age or medical condition – and those supposedly defending them. By now the mask of respectability had slipped from the faces of those who wore the swastika, the Death's Head or SS lightning bolt badges. The slavering faces of the monsters beneath were revealed as they roamed the city in gangs murdering anyone they deemed cowardly or defeatist. The corpses of old men and children alike swung creaking from the city's scorched lampposts and trees.

A doomed last stand was prepared. General Helmuth Weidling, the man to whom Hitler had given the impossible task of defending the Nazi capital, established a defensive perimeter around the city centre. His 85,000-strong force, made up of literally the last men (and boys) standing now, faced an onslaught from 500,000 Soviet troops.

In the early hours of 26th April, the final battle began. The streets quaked and crumbled as Soviet armour rumbled through them, while artillery and aircraft rained down fire from above. Every street was contested by infantry, with much of the fighting conducted house-to-house and hand-to-hand.

By 28th April, Tempelhof airport was in Soviet hands. There was now no way out, and the German lines were collapsing fast. The following evening, Soviet troops captured the Moltke Bridge over the River Spree, giving them direct access to the Nazi heart. Within hours they'd captured Gestapo Headquarters. They were now a mere kilometre from the Reichstag and just 700 metres from Hitler's bunker. The brutal end was, now, inevitable.

Weidling delivered the news to Hitler on the morning of 30th April, also informing him that his garrison only had enough ammunition to last 24 hours. He begged Der Führer to allow him to attempt a breakout, but there was to be no escape. Hitler dismissed Weidling's request, and later that afternoon blew his own brains out. Whether or not this news would have persuaded the die-hard Nazis defending the Reichstag to surrender is doubtful. What isn't, though, is that many of the men the Russians exterminated, as they fought their way to the top of the building, weren't German. The voices the Russians heard echoing along the burning corridors, in smoke-choked offices and even in the grand auditorium were French, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch and Latvian – members of the SS's various foreign legions, dying in the German capital while fighting for their twisted ideology. By 10.40pm that night, the swastika had been taken down from the roof of the Reichstag and replaced with the red flag of Soviet communism. The symbol of one defunct political ideology was replaced by that of what would eventually be another. The Battle of Berlin may have helped end World War II, but it also marked the start of a new global conflict, one that would last for the next 45 years and stretch around the world. For it was in the rubble of the Reichstag that the next global ideological conflict –the Cold War – was born.

1933 – 1945

Churchill

For five years Winston Churchill stood as a beacon of freedom in the darkest days of World War II. Discover how this unlikely champion picked up the skills to take on his Axis foes

In the blustery summer of 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gazed across to the distant shores of continental Europe, where the Nazi war machine had brought down Europe's great democracies, and said, "No more." Britain was battered and bruised, the Commonwealth and Empire stretched to breaking point, and a humiliated rag-tag of defeated armies pulled from the burning wreckage of conquered states stood in opposition to a nigh-on-unstoppable totalitarian Axis of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. Standing tall against this, Churchill was as powerful and enduring a symbol of the free world's defiance as the leonine roar of the Spitfires above the green patchwork of southern England.

That they were fighting on was testament to Churchill's abilities as a leader – he cajoled and convinced, bullied and hectored and played the rousing symphony of public opinion like a master conductor. Even the British establishment, panicked by the fall of France in June 1940 into contemplating surrender, needed to be picked up, dusted down and pushed back into the fight, and Churchill proved to be the perfect man for the job. The former Prime Minister is widely regarded as one of the 20th century's defining world leaders, yet Churchill's legacy hinges almost entirely on his performance during World War II. However, in truth, every great decision he made between 1940 and 1945 had already been foreshadowed by a long, distinguished and even chequered career that saw him influence the tide of history from the ministries of the British state, the back benches of the Commons, the officer's saddle and even the pages of the national press.

Britain's WWII leader was born in 1874, the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, a larger-than-life parliamentary figure in his own right who became Secretary of State for India, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons by the time Winston was 12. Their relationship was distant, with Winston recalling later in life that they hardly spoke, but they shared many of the same qualities. Both men had a reputation for fantastic oration with Randolph's childhood friend Lord Rosebery remarking, "His wit, his sarcasm, his piercing personalities, his elaborate irony, and his effective delivery, gave astonishing popularity to his speeches." They also shared radical mood swings, a driven work ethic and a taste for alcohol. Lord Randolph's death in 1895, aged 45, instilled in his 21-year-old son a fear that he too would die young, adding to his ambition and enduring reputation as 'a young man in a hurry.'

Winston spent four of the first six years of his life in Dublin where his grandfather, John Spencer-

WINSTON LEONARD SPENCER-CHURCHILL

Conservative, 1874 – 1965

Brief Bio

The aristocratic Churchill, born at the ancestral seat of Blenheim Palace, initially rose to prominence as an army officer, writer and politician. First Lord of the Admiralty during WWI, his tactical failure at Gallipoli saw him exiled to the political hinterlands until the outbreak of WWII, when he became Britain's most iconic wartime leader.

Churchill, was the Lord Lieutenant – effectively the monarch's representative in the then British-ruled Ireland. This is where the bulldog-to-be may have first found himself fascinated by troops, as he watched them parade outside his window. Lord Randolph would later prove a fierce opponent of any sniff of Irish nationalism, coining the slogan, 'Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right' beloved of the Protestant Unionists in Northern Ireland. In 1914, as Britain attempted to soothe the nationalists in the run up to WWI, Churchill would campaign vociferously in favour of the Home Rule Bill – using his role as First Lord of the Admiralty to order a squadron of battleships to Belfast as a threat to the mobilising Protestant paramilitaries, the Ulster Volunteers.

This was arguably the first time that Churchill's now-legendary immobility and refusal to compromise – which would be an enormous benefit during WWII – came into play. The government opted to negotiate, rescinding Churchill's order and entering a dialogue that would in 1914 lead to the partition of Ireland. This sort of compromise was anathema to Churchill, foreshadowing his dogged criticism of appeasement of Nazi Germany in 1937, his brutal response to the general strike in 1926, his dispatch of the infamous Black And Tans to Ireland and his belligerent denial of the Indian independence movement under Mahatma Gandhi. Churchill outlined his stance in his memoirs, writing, "I have always urged fighting wars and other contentions with might and main till overwhelming victory and then extending the hand of friendship to the vanquished… I thought we should have conquered the Irish then given them Home Rule, and that after smashing the General Strike we should have met the grievances of the miners."

As a blue blood growing up in the shadow of the British Empire, Winston Churchill seemed destined for the military, and with his poor academic record, it was one of the only viable routes available to him. The entrance exams for officer cadets at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst were considerably less trying that those of an Oxbridge undergraduate, and Churchill soon found himself a young officer in the 4th Queen's Own Hussars, fighting to enforce the will of the Empire across territories like South Africa, India and Sudan. Using his family connections, he secured postings in the most dramatic conflict zones of the day, earning extra money and building his public image through journalism with a view to "Return with two more decorations… and beat my sword into an iron dispatch box."

Churchill's war reporting was particularly jingoistic, and spoke loudly of his view of Britain's place in the world and of his attitudes to the Empire. "The British army had never fired on white troops since the Crimea, and now that the world was growing so sensible and pacific – and so democratic too – the great days were over," he wrote. "Luckily, however, there were still savages and barbarous peoples. There were Zulus and

Churchill gives his final address during the 1945 election campaign

> "Churchill genuinely believed in the British Empire as a civilising force that would bring cricket, decency and the English language"

War on communism

How Churchill's Russian folly made an enemy of Stalin

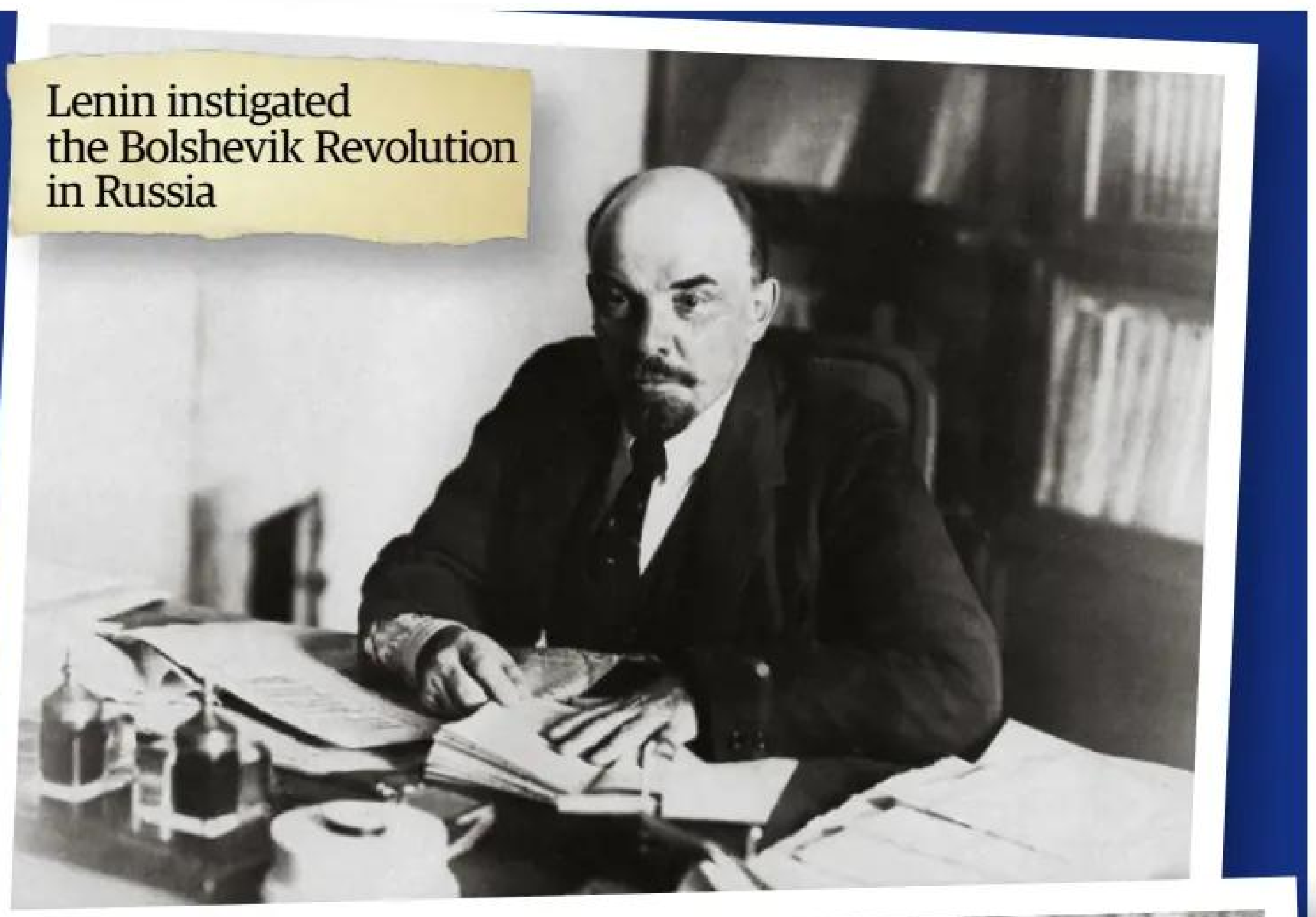
Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the sudden collapse of the Eastern Front in 1918 as Lenin's newly red Russia made peace with Germany, Churchill – as Minister of Munitions, and as of January 1919, Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for Air – was determined, "To strangle at birth the Bolshevik State." The British North Russian Relief Force landed at the sea port of Arkhangelsk to aid the 'White' anti-communist faction in the Russian Civil War, but between June 1918 and March 1920 little gains were made. However, this campaign was the scene of the first ever intricately co-ordinated aerial and naval bombardment and amphibious landing, a neat foreshadowing perhaps of one of the greatest such operations in history – D-Day.

Outlasting World War I, it became an increasingly bitter affair, motivated by rabid anti-communism that saw the press dub it 'Mr Churchill's private war'. On the ground court martials and disobedience were common, along with threats of strike action as soldiers realised that while their comrades on the Western Front had headed home, they were trudging through the snow being peppered with sniper fire.

Though Churchill and Stalin wouldn't meet until 1942, Stalin would come face to face with British forces in June 1919 when the 41-year-old ex-seminary student and bank robber from Georgia was leading the fighting against British troops. In honour of Stalin's defiance, Tsaritsyn would be renamed Stalingrad in 1925, and come World War II would be the scene of a bigger and bloodier battle.

Future influence

Though Churchill was quick to support the Soviet Union when Nazi Germany invaded in 1941, mutual suspicion between the two leaders always remained, in no small part because of Churchill's anti-communism stance. Throughout the war, Churchill and Stalin had a strained relationship, and after the war's end Churchill advocated a pre-emptive attack using the re-armed remnants of the German army.



Lenin instigated the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia

Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin meet in 1942

Afghans, also the Dervishes of the Sudan. Some of these might, if they were well-disposed, 'put up a show.'" These crude caricatures could be put down to the ignorance of youth, but in 1920 he mused on the links between Judaism and Bolshevism, and later still, in 1937, he spoke of the Native Americans and Australian Aboriginals, saying, "I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place."

The British Empire might have been at the height of its influence and prestige while Churchill galloped about, but over the decades that followed his entry to the Commons for the first time in 1900 as the MP for Oldham in Lancashire, it would swell to its geographic limit, creaking under its own weight and throwing up a set of challenges that would flow like tributaries into the churning oceans of the two world wars. Whether fighting for Britain with his thunderous rhetoric from the green benches of Parliament or with his cavalry sabre on dusty Sudanese slopes, it's clear Churchill saw it as one calling, saying to a journalist in 1906, "Politics are almost as exciting as war and quite as dangerous."

As the dogged defender of an empire mostly gained and largely maintained through force of arms, through modern eyes Churchill had disquieting commonalities with fascist regimes. His brushes with racism and anti-Semitism speak for themselves, but unlike the future Axis powers, who saw expansion as purely for the betterment of their own people, Churchill genuinely believed in the British Empire as a civilising force that would bring trains, civil service, cricket, decency and English language to those unfortunate enough to have been born without them. The real overlap, though, was a shared pathological hatred of communism, which could so easily have seen him become Hitler's cheerleader instead of implacable foe. He warned in 1929 of "A poisoned Russia, an

Churchill's medals

What Churchill's battle experiences reveal about the future leader of Britain

The 'rebellious' Pashtun Tribe

VICTORIA REGINA ET IMPERATRIX

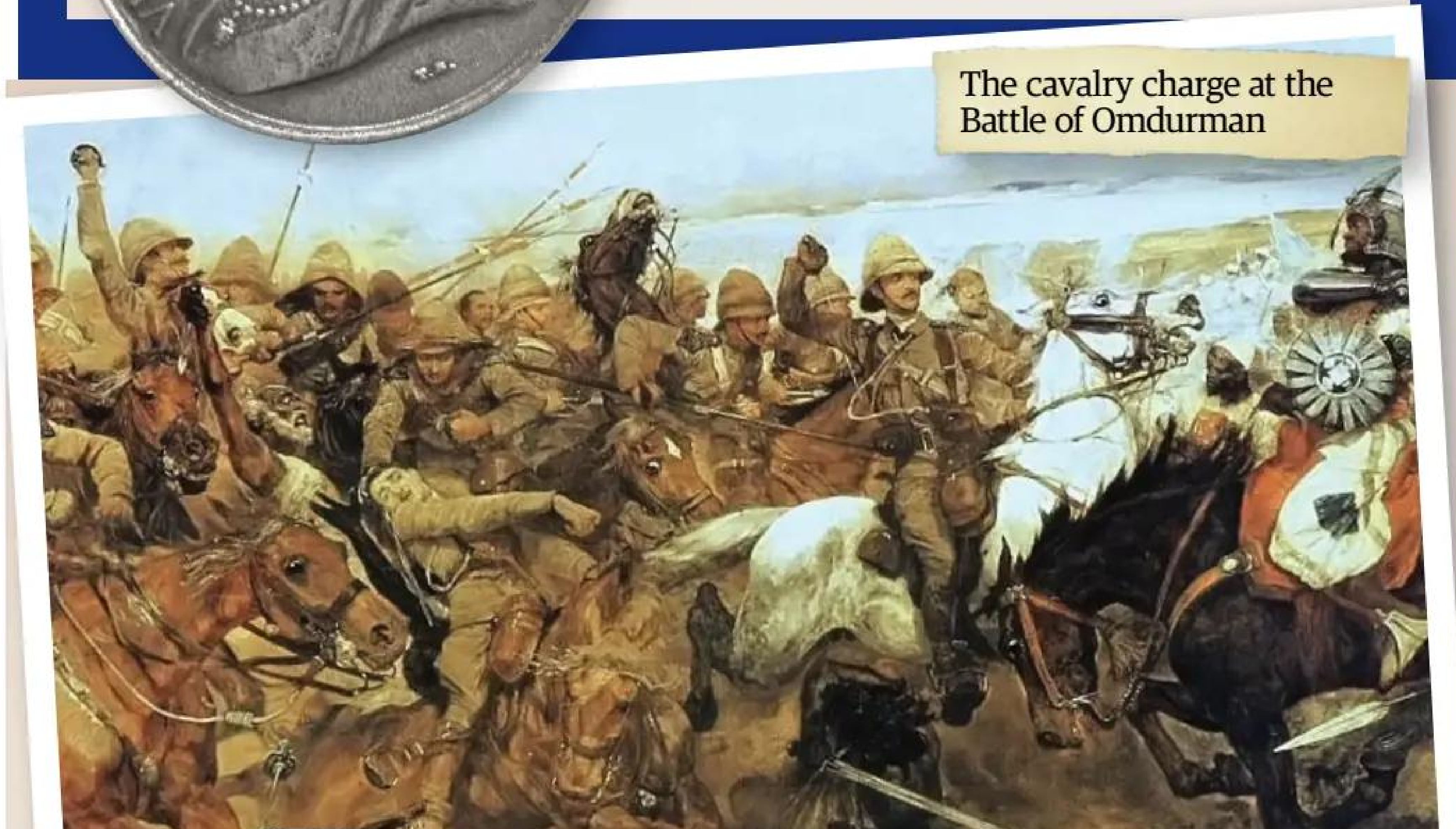
INDIA MEDAL (1898)

Churchill's first experience of the Empire in action, he served at Malakand in the lawless north-west frontier of India to put down rebellious Pashtun tribes. His experiences were recorded through various newspapers and his book *The Story Of The Malakand Field Force*.

Soldiers take a break from fighting during fighting in Gallipoli in WWI

VICTORY MEDAL (1920)

Following the Gallipoli backlash, Churchill headed to the Western Front to redeem himself. Though he disapproved of the overall strategy, he continued to exhibit daring and made 36 trips into No Man's Land. He wrote in his diary, "I have found happiness and content such as I have not known for many months."



The cavalry charge at the Battle of Omdurman

VICTORIA REGINA ET IMPERATRIX

THE QUEEN'S SUDAN MEDAL (1899)

Transferred to Sudan with the 21st Lancers, Churchill took part in the decisive Battle of Omdurman against the rebels in one of the world's last significant cavalry charges.

Churchill as a prisoner of the Boers in 1899 before he mounted a daring escape

KHEDIVE'S SUDAN MEDAL (1899)

Resigning his commission for a failed shot at the Oldham by-election in 1899, he returned to the field the same year for the Second Boer War as a war correspondent. Ambushed while travelling, he escaped captivity and travelled 300 miles to safety.

Future influence

Churchill's vast experience in the field shaped his policies during WWII and provided a solid grounding of military tactics. Perhaps due to his earlier career, Churchill would favour decisive and daring campaigns during WWII.

infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes not only smiting with bayonet and with cannon, but… political doctrines which destroyed the health and even the souls of nations." Earlier still, in 1919 he heaped the blame for WWI's catastrophic loss of life on not the German Empire or Austro-Hungary, but on the "baboonery" of Russian Bolsheviks who had pulled the country out of the war, saying, "Every British and French soldier killed last year was really done to death by Lenin and Trotsky."

The man who would one day stare down the Axis advance even praised Mussolini, saying in 1927, "If I had been an Italian, I am sure I would have been entirely with you from the beginning to the end of your victorious struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism" and showed Hitler begrudging respect. As late as 1935 he wondered, "Whether Hitler will be the man who will once again let loose upon the world another war… or whether he will go down in history as the man who restored honour and peace of mind to the Great Germanic nation." Whatever overlap existed between Britain's brand of imperialism – for all its misuse, still tethered to the principles of parliamentary democracy – and that practised by the racist and totalitarian regimes of Italy, Germany and Japan grew increasingly slimmer on the march to war. In parallel, Churchill's anti-red rhetoric also softened, and the bulldog not only attacked Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler, but criticised him for not seeking a rapprochement with Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union – an unlikelier U-turn is harder to image.

This shift in position, the one that ultimately placed Churchill at the helm of Britain in her darkest hour, was nothing to do with political ideology and everything to do with political reality. Churchill the enemy of communism had been trumped by that first love – Churchill the imperialist. His early fears of Soviet-backed mischief in India and Ireland had been replaced by Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean, Japanese ambitions in Asia and growing German naval power, which brought them sharply into Britain's dimming spheres of influence. This rabid defence of the Empire, a product of his upbringing and his life serving this ideal, would shape his strategies in World War II, as well as transform him from an authoritarian avatar of the old order to the champion of freedom. The decision to fight primarily in North Africa, the Middle-East and

Upbringing

How Churchill's early years moulded his later career

With a family line that stretched back to John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough and commander in the 1701-14 War of the Spanish Succession that led to the acquisition of Gibraltar from Spain and Newfoundland and chunks of Canada from France, Winston seemed fated to serve as the British Empire's most ardent defender.

He was raised in the shadow of his grandfather and father, both career statesmen in the governments of Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Robert Cecil, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury. Disraeli, credited with the formation of the modern British Conservative Party, also made it a party indivisible from the greater glory of the British Empire – bartering ownership of the Suez Canal and kicking off unpopular wars in South Africa and Afghanistan to pacify rebels – a mission continued by Cecil, who presided over the First Boer War. It was in this most blue-blooded brotherhood and against this constant backdrop of overseas expansion that three generations of Churchills served in office and Winston himself was raised.

His relationship with his father was distant, and young Winston's upbringing was largely entrusted to a nanny – not uncommon for children of such stature – at the Marlboroughs' ancestral Blenheim Palace, a seven-acre stately home in Oxfordshire, which in true Churchill family fashion has a prominent statue of Britannia presiding over two French captives. Following a number of schools ill-suited to Winston's difficult and distinctly non-academic temperament, he was sent to Harrow aged 13, where he found his true calling amid the dusty Latin rote learning – the Harrow Volunteer Rifle Corps. Other students recalled the Harrow Rifles as not being a particularly popular group until at least the late 19th century, so that Churchill joined within weeks of his arrival speaks volumes about his enthusiasm for military matters. In fact, despite his unease with education, the Harrow Rifles seemed to trigger a passion for knowledge in Churchill, who wrote to his father in 1889 that, "I bought a book on drill, as I intend going in for the corporal examinations next term." With many of the traditional careers set aside for his social class – law, civil service, and through them a route to politics – conditional on university education and so firmly out of Churchill's reach, Sandhurst beckoned, and with it a chance to fulfil that most ancient imperative of the Dukes of Marlborough – the defence of the Empire.

On a return home, the young Winston enjoyed a rare encounter with his father as Lord Randolph thoughtfully inspected his son's vast collection of lead soldiers. "He spent 20 minutes studying the scene, with a keen eye and captivating smile," Winston recalled in his autobiography. "At the end he asked me if I would like to go into the army. I thought it would be splendid to command an army, so I said 'Yes' at once; and I was immediately taken at my word."

2nd Lieutenant Winston Churchill, 1895

Future influence

Churchill was brought up in an era in which the British Empire was the dominant force on the planet, whose influence spread far and wide. Aligned to his aristocratic upbringings, it is no surprise that Churchill was brought up utterly confident in his, and his country's place in the world. This confidence – unshakeable and at times unjustifiable – would strongly influence how he led the country after 1940.

Key moments that shaped Churchill

1895

- **Army service**
  1895
  Churchill joins the 4th Hussars, and goes on to serve in India, Sudan and Egypt.
- **Daring escape**
  1899
  Churchill is captured in the Second Boer War, becoming a celebrity, and a year later is elected as a Conservative Party MP.
- **Party defection**
  1904
  After opposing a government bill, Churchill is de-selected by the Conservatives and joins the Liberals.
- **Real power**
  1910
  He becomes Home Secretary, sends troops to support the police against striking miners and proposes a referendum on women's voting rights.
- **Naval reforms**
  1911
  Churchill is promoted to First Lord of the Admiralty, where he undertakes sweeping reforms.
- **Resignation**
  1915
  Churchill resigns from the cabinet following the Gallipoli campaign and rejoins the army. He would return to parliament the next year.

American connection

Establishing the special relationship

Churchill always had one eye on the United States of America, and through his American-born mother, the New York socialite and alleged inventor of the Manhattan cocktail Jennie Jerome, he had a trans-Atlantic connection that he would later play up to its full, with maternal ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War against Britain, and even, according to family legend, some Native American blood.

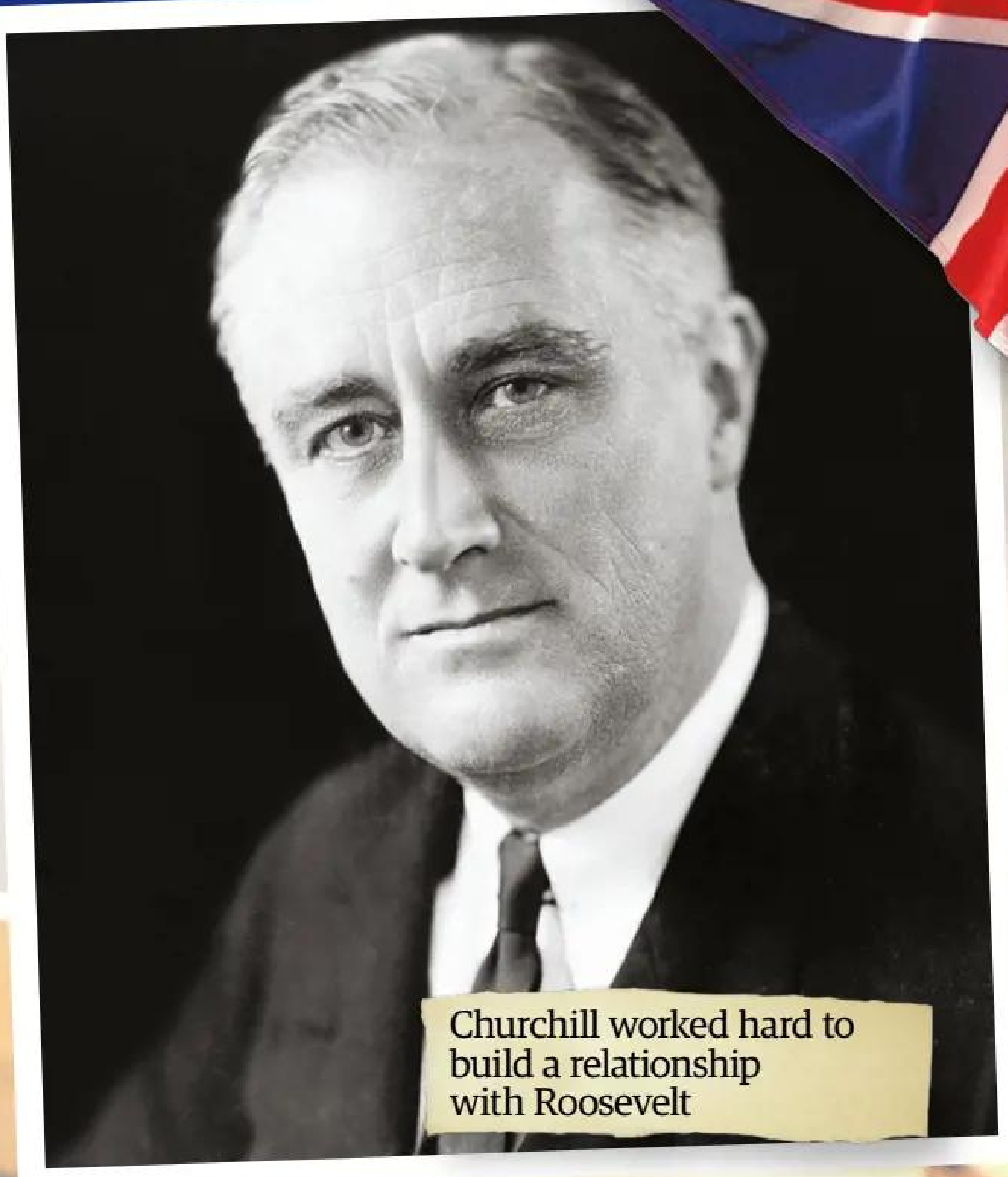
Even as early in his career as 1903, he told the gathered occupants of the House of Commons, "I have always thought that it ought to be the main end of English state-craft to cultivate good relations with the United States," and his epic *A History Of The English Speaking Peoples*, which he started in 1937 and finally published well after World War II, seemed contrived to create a sense of kinship between the US and the British Commonwealth. In 1939, Churchill, in his capacity as First Lord of the Admiralty, began corresponding with President Theodore Roosevelt (who'd met him once before, having been told by his advisers that Churchill was a "drunk and a windbag") – who was determined to keep the US well out of any conflict. However, Churchill did have a role to play in not only bringing the US and UK closer together, but also in paving the way for a future conflict with Imperial Japan.

As of 1902, Britain had been allied with the newly modernised Japan in order to checkmate their shared rival Tsarist Russia and, renewed in 1905 and 1911, this treaty also entrusted the defence of Australia and New Zealand to the Japanese navy during World War I so as to free up British ships for European combat. The 1921 Imperial Conference was called in part to negotiate their collective stance toward the United States and Japan, who many believed were on a collision course for dominance of the Pacific. Churchill attended in his capacity of Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the end result was to allow the Japanese alliance to lapse, in the hope of gaining American goodwill.

Japan's isolated position from the other world powers increased its belligerence, ending its participation in the Washington Naval Treaty that capped the size of battleships in 1936 and walking out of the League of Nations in 1933 over criticism of its annexation of Manchuria. "Japan is on the other end of the world," Churchill wrote in 1924. "She cannot menace our vital security." It seems optimistic, but undercutting Churchill's stance was the belief that there was nothing Japan could do without provoking a reaction from the United States. He was ultimately right, but proving it would cost many lives.

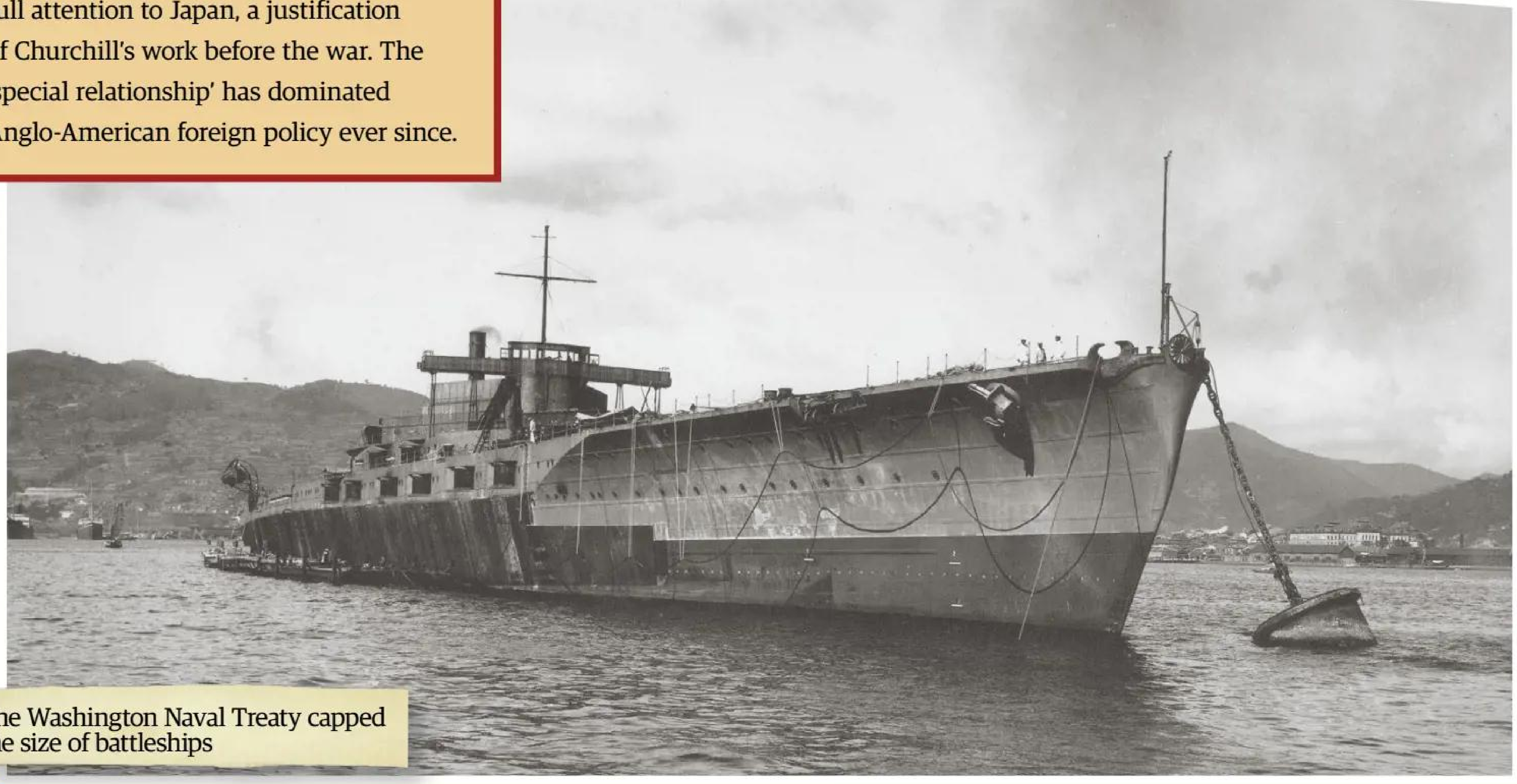
Future influence

Churchill worked the American connection hard in an attempt to build a close relationship but, nevertheless, soon after the outbreak of WWII, Britain was isolated. However, when Pearl Harbour was attacked, Roosevelt was persuaded to adopt a 'Germany first' strategy to relieve Britain before they turned their full attention to Japan, a justification of Churchill's work before the war. The 'special relationship' has dominated Anglo-American foreign policy ever since.



Churchill worked hard to build a relationship with Roosevelt

Allied leaders, including Roosevelt and Churchill, confer in Quebec during WWII



The Washington Naval Treaty capped the size of battleships

1940

Election failure
1922
Fails to retain his seat in the general election and rejoins the Tories, saying, "anyone can rat, but it takes a certain ingenuity to re-rat."

Wilderness years
1929
With the Conservative government defeated in the General Election, he becomes estranged from the party and his 'wilderness years' begin.

Appeasement
1938
As Germany annexes Austria and overruns Czechoslovakia, Neville Chamberlain holds fast to his policy of appeasement, with Churchill a strong critic.

War cabinet
1939
War is declared and Churchill appointed First Lord of the Admiralty and a member of the War Cabinet, advocating a pre-emptive occupation of key ports.

Blood, sweat and tears
1940
Chamberlain resigns following the invasion of Norway, and Churchill is the agreed upon successor. He delivers his iconic 'blood, sweat and tears' speech.

then Italy at the expense of other theatres – to the irritation of both the USA and the USSR – was primarily to safeguard the Suez Canal, a vital artery of the Empire through which valuable raw materials from India to Britain were shipped, and protect the oil fields of Iraq and Persia.

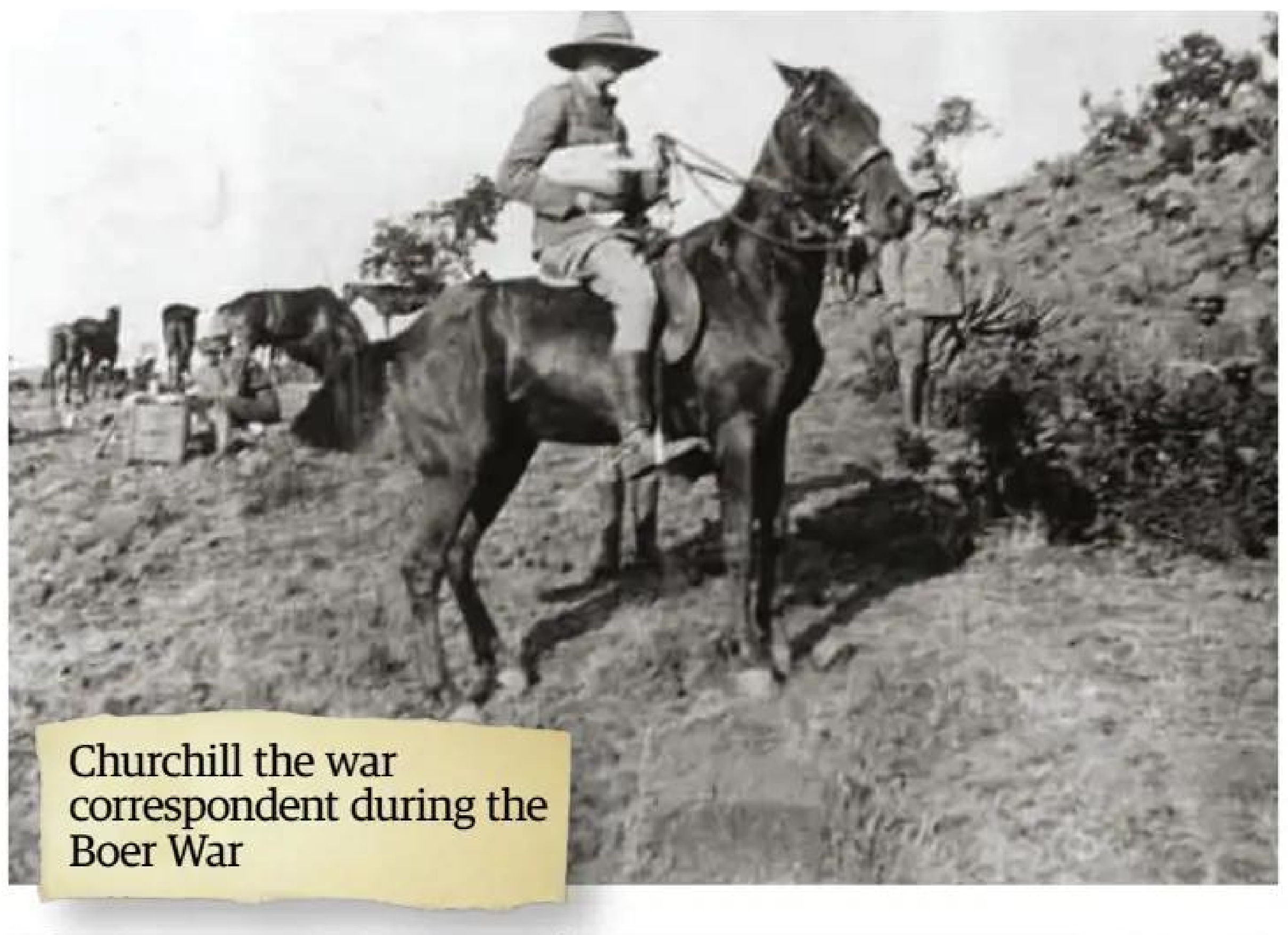
Churchill's stubbornness, belligerence and refusal to negotiate under threat helped keep the Allies fighting in their dark days, but they would have been nothing without his innovative approach to military technology, which his entire life had shaped him for. Churchill may have been a poor student back when he was in short trousers, but he devoured Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence Of Sea Power Upon History*, and told his mother in 1898 that, "Command of the sea is everything." Fittingly for such an absolute proclamation, when he was appointed as First Lord of The Admiralty in 1911, he went about perhaps the single most radical campaign of his career to date, the one that says the most about the kind of Prime Minister he would eventually become. Fearing growing German naval power, he immersed himself in naval lore and tactics.

It wasn't just the machinery and the rules of conflict that fascinated him, but the organisation, and he established a new Naval War Staff to co-ordinate strategy more fully with the government's War Office, much to the alarm of the high-ranking Sea Lords, who prized their independence – not that their opinions mattered much, and by the end of his first year in office he'd replaced three out of the four with more pliant figures. Churchill rolled out a new line of 'super dreadnoughts' – the largest warships ever built at the time – and began to explore the potential of submarines, launching planes from ships and switched the fleet from coal to oil-powered, which increased their speed and decreased the plumes of smoke which frequently betrayed their positions. He also threw his support, along with naval research funds, behind another promising new contraption – the tank, bizarrely considered a 'landship' and therefore falling under his remit.

It would be the possibilities of air power that stuck with him the most though, warning parliament in 1933, "Not to have an adequate air force in the present state of the world is to compromise the foundations of national freedom and independence." It is therefore no surprise that Churchill proved himself to be a talented leader of Britain's air force, and the thirst for new technology and tactics he showed throughout his life would lead him toward sponsoring such celebrated pieces of wartime ingenuity as the Bletchley Park code breakers and the birth of commando warfare.

Churchill's overthrow of the Sea Lords and his mission to bring the navy into a more central decision-making process was a dry run of sorts for his War Cabinet during WWII, in which he held the key positions of both Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, as well as his personal contact and sporadic micro-management of commanders in the field. This, along with his

A seven-year-old Winston Churchill poses for the camera


Churchill the war correspondent during the Boer War

Winston Churchill and German Emperor Wilhelm II in 1906

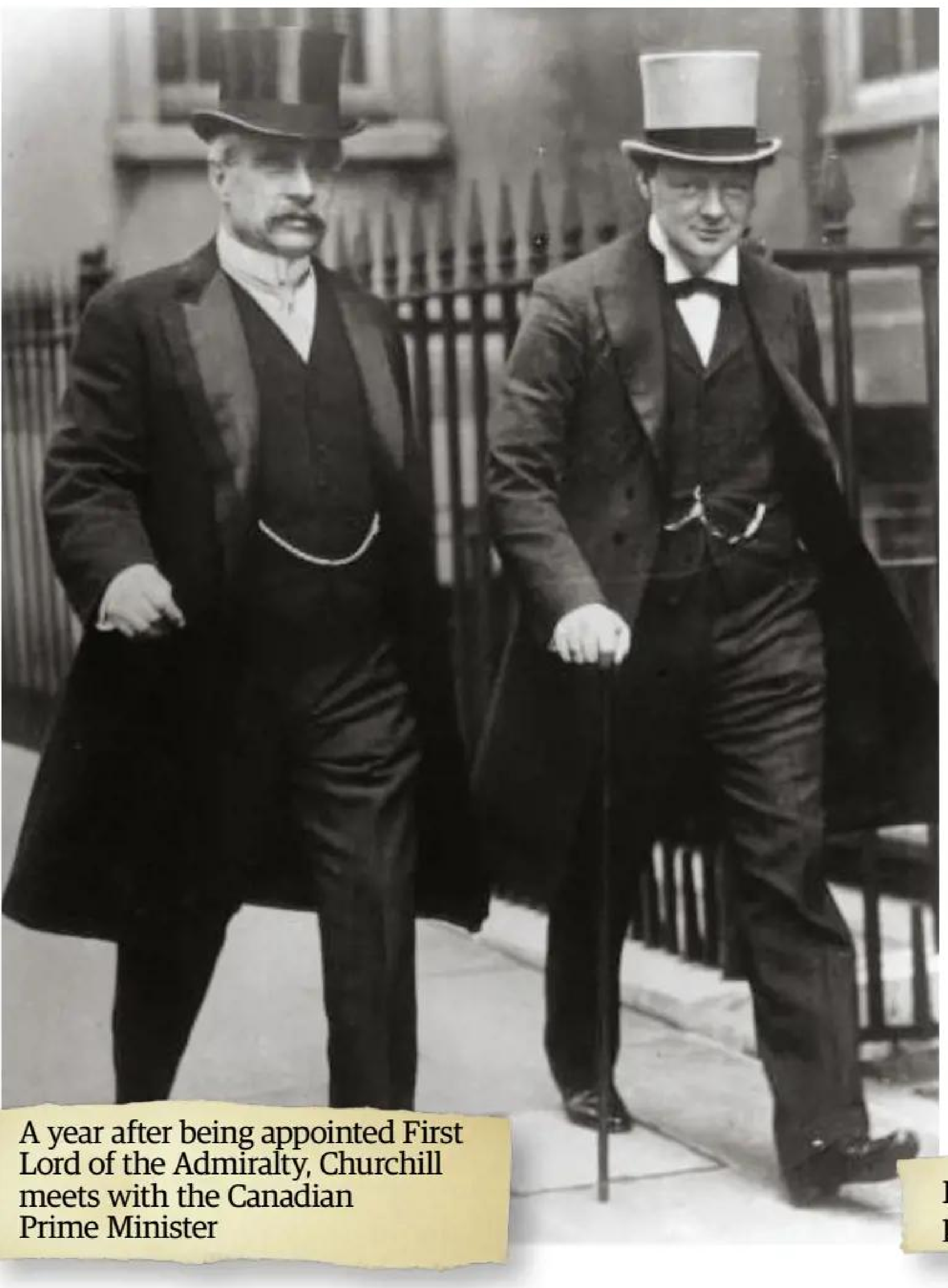
Churchill reviews an honour guard in Berlin, where he was attending the Potsdam Conference in 1945

A half-length portrait of Winston Churchill in 1900, the year he first became an MP

Sir Winston, his son Randolph and grandson Winston

Churchill poses with an elephant he has shot

Churchill during a visit to Egypt in 1910



A year after being appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill meets with the Canadian Prime Minister

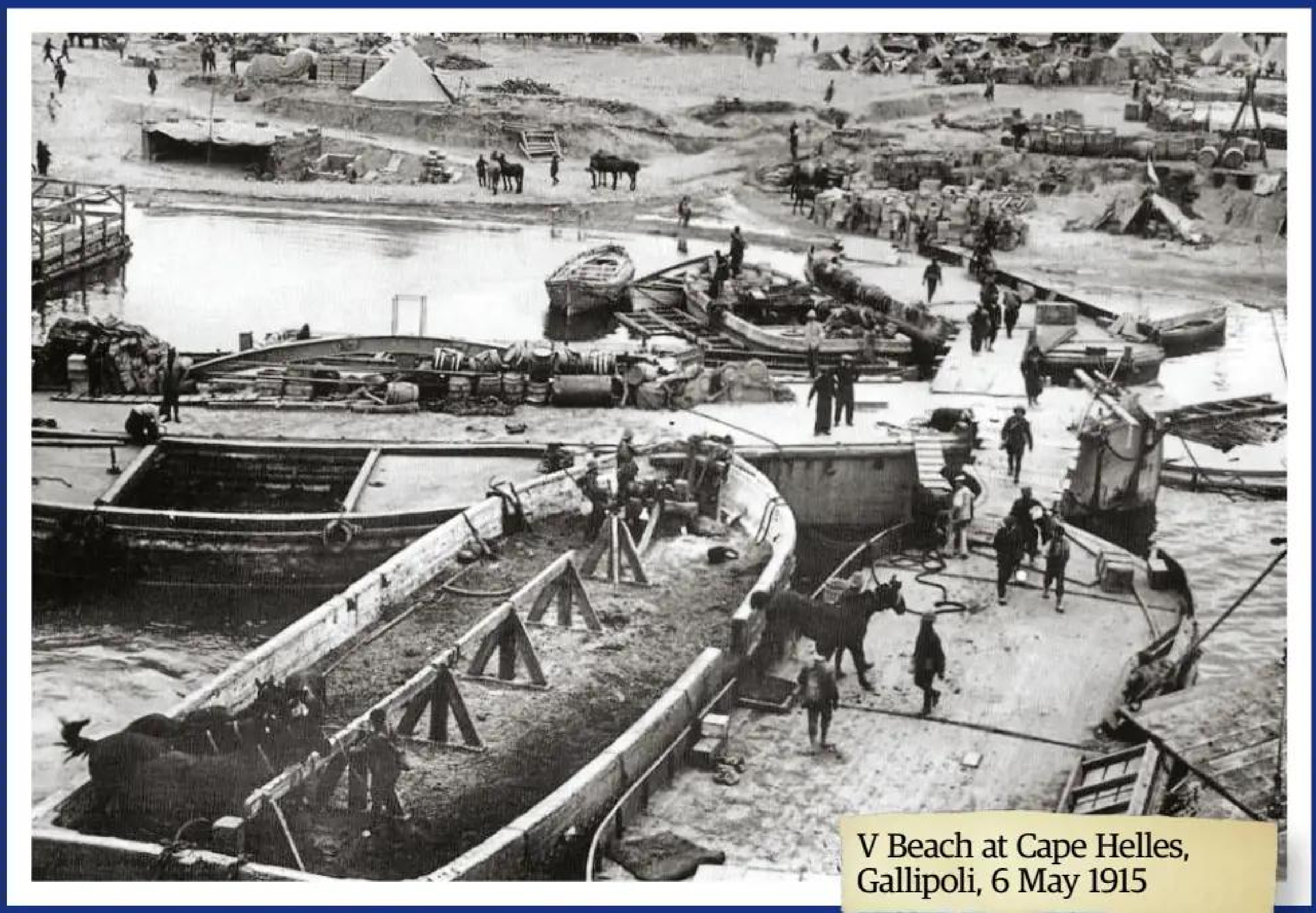
In 1904, Churchill left the Conservative party for the Liberals

Gallipoli

How Churchill recovered from disaster

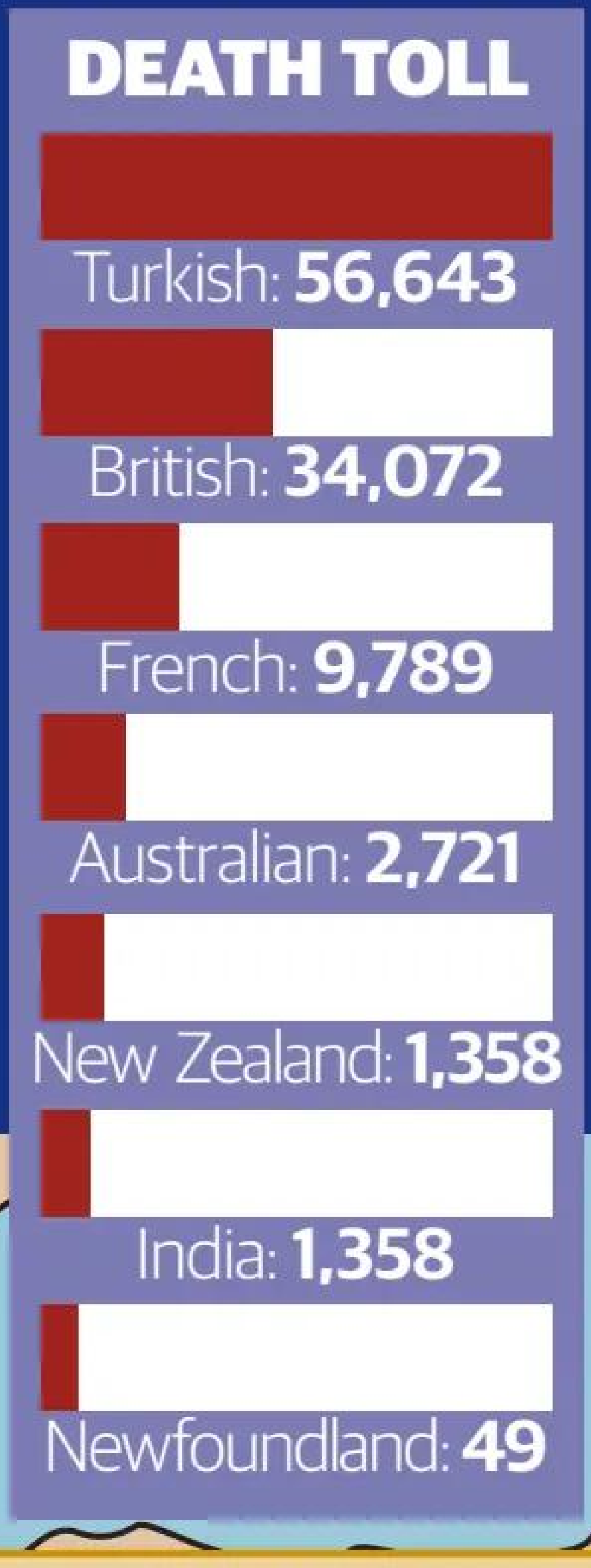
Despite British naval supremacy, World War I had yet to see a decisive naval engagement when Churchill posited an ambitious plan to take the Dardanelles, the first of two channels through Ottoman Turkey (a German ally) that would link up France and Britain in the Mediterranean with Tsarist Russian in the Black Sea.

The plan was to have British and French warships simply charge through the Turkish blockade via sheer power, and then land troops (including many members of the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, the ANZACs) at Gallipoli. The heavily mined coast and unexpectedly high number of gun emplacements took their toll on the attackers, and when the troops landed, they were largely unsupported by the panicked high command at sea, who refused to move to close to the shore. Early gains weren't followed up, allowing the Turkish forces time to reinforce their position, turning this hoped-for quick campaign into another entrenched slog, only up a cliff face instead of over a Belgian field. Between 25th April 1915 and 9th January 1916, 252,000 Allied soldiers were killed before evacuation and an Australian war reporter broke the censorship to smuggle out a damning report of the commander on the ground, General Hamilton. The problem was in the planning and the divided chain of command. Churchill, who insisted the Ottomans would crumble, and General Hamilton, who was slow to take the initiative, bore the brunt of the blame, both castigated in the press and forced from their positions, but others too should have been held to account, perhaps even more so – Admiral John de Robeck refused Churchill's order to bring his ships in and provide support, while military planners in London had cut the numbers of troops set aside for the mission.

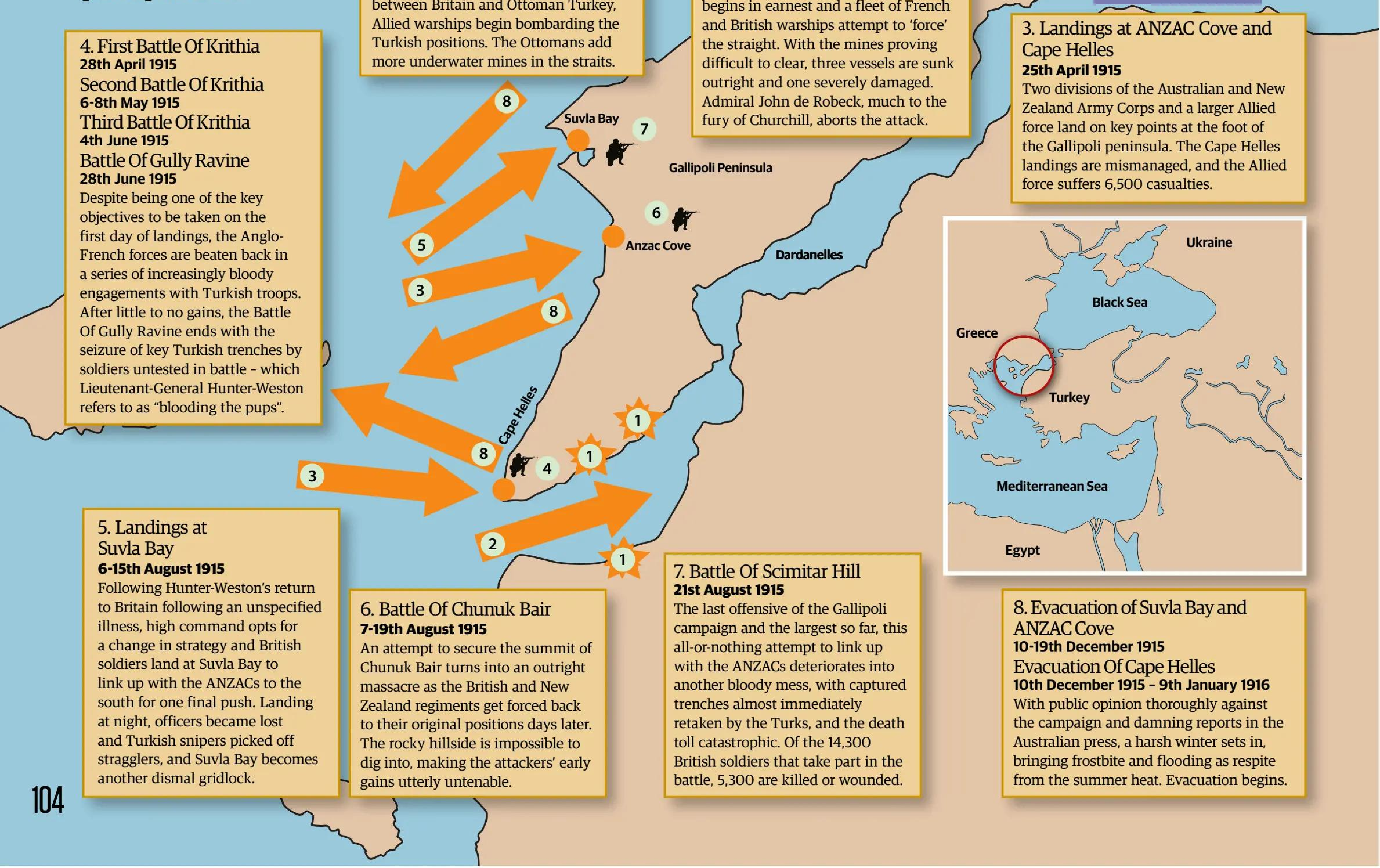

V Beach at Cape Helles, Gallipoli, 6 May 1915

Future influence

Churchill's enthusiasm for decisive action (and greater control of the commanders in the field) was strengthened – something that would influence just how much responsibility he took on during WWII. Even if he did not deserve all of the blame he bore, the setback hardened his resolve to prove himself.



KEY
[Soldier] Battle
[Explosion] Bombardment
[Arrow] Movement



1. Bombardment of the Turkish positions

3rd November 1914

Prior to the official declaration of war between Britain and Ottoman Turkey, Allied warships begin bombarding the Turkish positions. The Ottomans add more underwater mines in the straits.

2. The Navy attempts to force the straits

18th March 1915

After further probing, Churchill's plan begins in earnest and a fleet of French and British warships attempt to 'force' the straight. With the mines proving difficult to clear, three vessels are sunk outright and one severely damaged. Admiral John de Robeck, much to the fury of Churchill, aborts the attack.

3. Landings at ANZAC Cove and Cape Helles

25th April 1915

Two divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps and a larger Allied force land on key points at the foot of the Gallipoli peninsula. The Cape Helles landings are mismanaged, and the Allied force suffers 6,500 casualties.

4. First Battle Of Krithia

28th April 1915

Second Battle Of Krithia

6-8th May 1915

Third Battle Of Krithia

4th June 1915

Battle Of Gully Ravine

28th June 1915

Despite being one of the key objectives to be taken on the first day of landings, the Anglo-French forces are beaten back in a series of increasingly bloody engagements with Turkish troops. After little to no gains, the Battle Of Gully Ravine ends with the seizure of key Turkish trenches by soldiers untested in battle – which Lieutenant-General Hunter-Weston refers to as "blooding the pups".

5. Landings at Suvla Bay

6-15th August 1915

Following Hunter-Weston's return to Britain following an unspecified illness, high command opts for a change in strategy and British soldiers land at Suvla Bay to link up with the ANZACs to the south for one final push. Landing at night, officers became lost and Turkish snipers picked off stragglers, and Suvla Bay becomes another dismal gridlock.

6. Battle Of Chunuk Bair

7-19th August 1915

An attempt to secure the summit of Chunuk Bair turns into an outright massacre as the British and New Zealand regiments get forced back to their original positions days later. The rocky hillside is impossible to dig into, making the attackers' early gains utterly untenable.

7. Battle Of Scimitar Hill

21st August 1915

The last offensive of the Gallipoli campaign and the largest so far, this all-or-nothing attempt to link up with the ANZACs deteriorates into another bloody mess, with captured trenches almost immediately retaken by the Turks, and the death toll catastrophic. Of the 14,300 British soldiers that take part in the battle, 5,300 are killed or wounded.

8. Evacuation of Suvla Bay and ANZAC Cove

10-19th December 1915

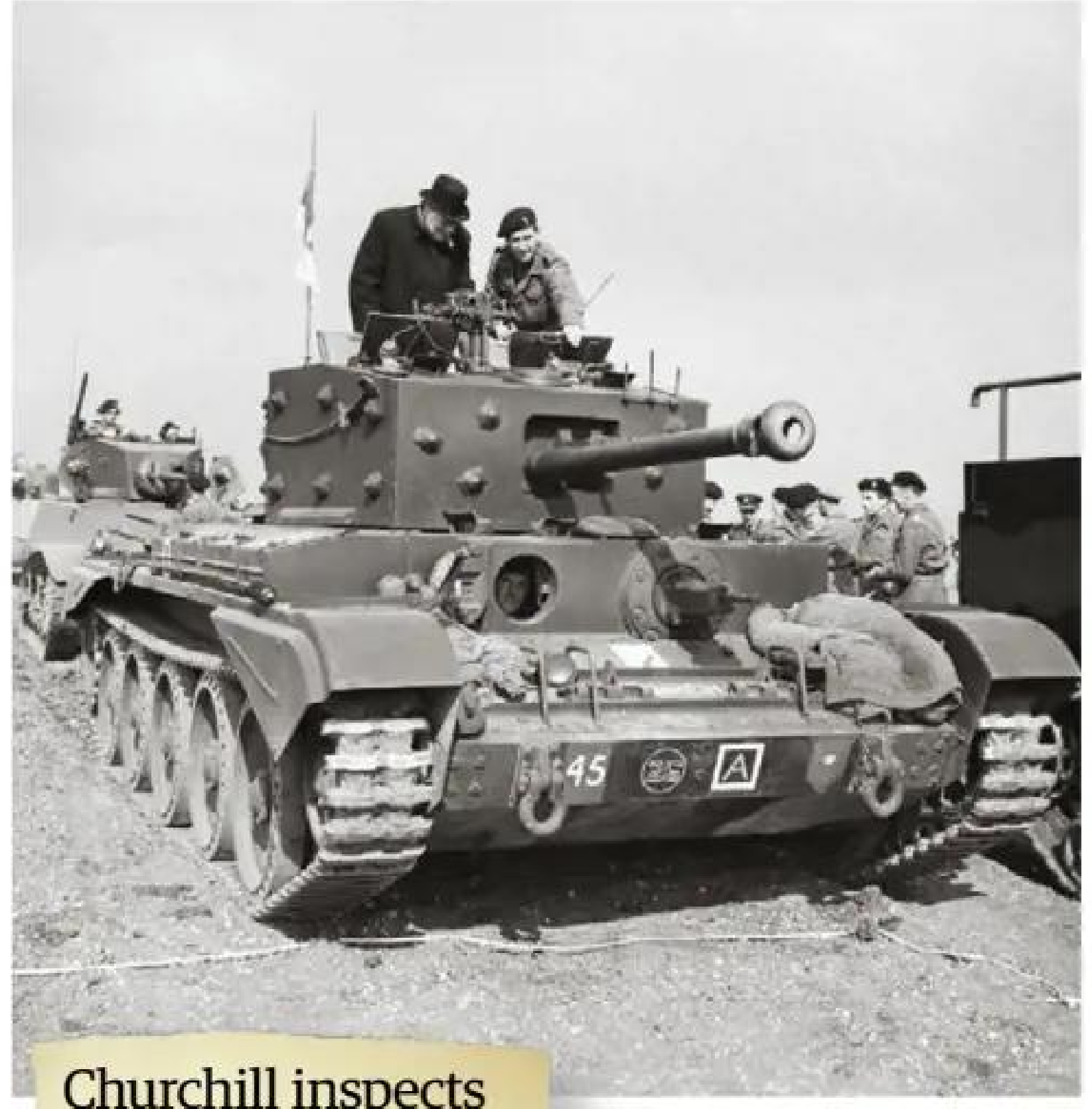
Evacuation Of Cape Helles

10th December 1915 – 9th January 1916

With public opinion thoroughly against the campaign and damning reports in the Australian press, a harsh winter sets in, bringing frostbite and flooding as respite from the summer heat. Evacuation begins.

Churchill steps off his airplane in Berlin after the end of WWII

Churchill, with his Chiefs of Staff in the garden of No 10 Downing Street



Churchill inspects a British tank

Churchill at his seat in the Cabinet Room at No 10 Downing Street

© Alamy, Getty; Joe Cummings

> "His bold - and often unrealistic - strategies would infuriate his commanders in WWII"

bold - and often unrealistic - strategies would infuriate his commanders in WWII as regularly as it did in the previous war. Captain Osmond de Beauvoir Brock, then the Assistant Director of Naval Mobilisation, observed of Churchill's appointment in 1911, "whether all his schemes are quite sound I shouldn't like to say, but I do know that those which have come this way bear traces of great haste and little thought."

Perhaps influenced by the cavalry officer he once was, Churchill favoured bold, headline-grabbing actions that would decisively turn the tide of battle, and it was four years later in 1915 where he was knocked bloody-nosed from the saddle. The disastrous Gallipoli landings wound up as an inglorious failure, and he was ignominiously ousted from office, choosing to serve at the front to rehabilitate his reputation. His experience of the mud and squalor doubtless hardened his commitment further to grand strategies like Gallipoli, and in WWII he would drag his heels over an invasion of France, instead focusing on 'peripheral' campaigns, some successful and some every bit as ignominious.

To say Churchill was the right man at the right time sounds disingenuous, but it's tough to imagine that his indomitable strength of character, willingness to tightly grasp the reigns of power, sometimes cynical pragmatism, hawkish approach to foreign policy and fundamental belief in the primacy of the British Empire could be found in any other form. Churchill's career has more than its fair share of tragedies, missteps and moments of outright hypocrisy, but all of his past was little more than a canvas with which he would sketch out his future glory. Churchill at his worst could have been little better than the vicious tyrants he fought - a ferocious and fanatical defender of Britain's power and prestige - but the alchemy of circumstance made the most fantastic virtues of his vices, and by 1940 the world saw Churchill at his very best.

American President Harry Truman and Winston Churchill shake hands, 1945

1933 – 1945

Franklin D Roosevelt

At the height of the Great Depression an unlikely candidate stepped forward to help the US through some of its darkest years

When Franklin D Roosevelt won his first presidential election in 1933 he was taking command of a country in crisis. He ran on the Democratic ticket with a desire to help the average American citizen. He had his job cut out for him as the national average rate for unemployment was one in four, but in some cities and industries that figure was as high as 50 per cent. A staggering 13 million Americans were without work and some were going hungry. To make matters worse, the country was also in dire financial straits. Since the crash on Wall Street 4,000 banks had closed for good, and by 1933 that number rose to more than 9,000, with $2.5 billion in lost deposits. This resulted in millions of Americans losing their savings – if they arrived at the bank too late, there would simply be no money to withdraw. The panics raised troubling questions about credit value and many started to question capitalism itself. Something needed to be done to avert catastrophe. Acting as soon as he entered office, Roosevelt and Congress declared a four-day 'bank holiday' and emergency banking acts to help stem the outpouring of the nation's wealth. He also managed to instill confidence in the country with his rousing inauguration speech featuring the quote, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself".

> Franklin D Roosevelt is the only president to have been elected four times, with the support of 36 out of 48 states in the last election before his death

Roosevelt sought to rectify these problems with a range of domestic programs called the New Deal. It focused on what were known as the 'three Rs', relief, recovery and reform. Relief was the immediate action that was taken to halt further economic failure. Recovery saw temporary programs implemented to restart consumer spending and reform saw more permanent programmes put in place to avoid another crash and safeguard savings. With these actions the American people began to see hope in the new Democratic Party. The Republicans under Hoover had said the worst was over and only hard work and determination would see the United States though, but these had actually turned out to be either dismal lies or woeful predictions.

Some of Roosevelt's more conservative supporters felt betrayed by his actions, however. Indeed many of those from inside his own party viewed him with disdain, seeing him as rich, spoiled and unwilling to cooperate. Here was a man who was taking money away from big business and then reinvesting it into the working man. Under Roosevelt, a huge federal bureaucracy would grow that was designed to prop up the average American who was down on his luck. This might seem a little surprising considering his childhood and background.

FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT

Democrat, 1882 – 1945

Brief Bio

The only president to be elected four times, Franklin D Roosevelt helped the US to transition out of the Great Depression with his revolutionary New Deal. He would later oversee his country's entry into World War II following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and remains one of the most significant figures in American history.

The last photograph of FDR, taken the day before his death

Life in the time of Franklin D Roosevelt

Dance to forget

Some of the Roaring Twenties' nightlife carried over into the next decade, with flocks of young people descending on ballrooms and dance halls where the swing bands would play. This would serve as a welcome distraction from the realities of real life.

A call to serve your country

For the first time in its history the US initiated a peacetime draft for men from 21-36 years of age in 1940. FDR was famous for promising the mothers of the United States that he would not send their sons to fight in foreign wars, WWII would change that.

The United States had become isolationist

After WWI many Americans were in favour of adopting an isolationist policy. Keen to avoid more bloodshed that they had witnessed just a few years previously, anti-war feelings were strong even as the Axis powers ravaged Europe. It would take the attack on Pearl Harbor to bring the US into WWII.

The world was changing

In just a few short years between the wars, people saw technology jump forward in leaps and bounds. Machines like aeroplanes, which at the turn of the century were little more than a curiosity, would evolve massively in people's lifetimes to revolutionise global travel, trade and warfare.

Mouths to feed

Aid for citizens hit hard by the Great Depression could come from many directions, not just the government. Notorious gangster Al Capone opened one of the very first soup kitchens in Chicago in 1931, feeding the masses of unemployed who were on the street desperate to find work.

The first lady of the world

Eleanor Roosevelt, fifth cousin once removed and wife to Franklin D Roosevelt, was a formidable political figure in American politics. From her support of FDR through his illness, serving as first lady through his four terms, to her work at the UN she was not someone to live in her husband's shadow.

She had met Franklin on a train in 1902 and from there they had begun a secret correspondence that turned into a romance. Although Franklin's mother disapproved of the match the pair were married on 17th March 1905. Unfortunately it was not to be happily ever after as Franklin's affair with a secretary would force Eleanor to give him an ultimatum: end the relationship or divorce. He chose to end the relationship but the episode had shown Eleanor that she should pursue her own happiness in public life.

As a staunch supporter of civil rights she helped sway the African-American vote, that were usually pointing Republican, to become a consistent base for the Democratic Party.

After her husband's passing Eleanor became the first chairperson for the United Nations Commission of Human Rights and stayed in the position until 1947. In the 1950s she embarked on an exhaustive touring schedule both at home and abroad on behalf of the UN and the work she did there. In 1962 she passed away after a battle with a rare bone marrow disease.

Eleanor Roosevelt transcended her role as first lady to become an adept politician in her own right

HOTEL-NATIONAL

Roosevelt walks with James M Cox during their failed presidential campaign of 1920

Franklin D Roosevelt was born into an old, prominent and above all rich, Dutch family in the Hudson Valley town of Hyde Park. Being tutored at home from a young age he did not interact with many other children his own age. His mother Sara was a particularly prominent influence throughout his childhood, but he was also close with his father and the family took frequent trips together to Europe.

While his schooling and higher educational years would bring him little joy he flourished as a lawyer, passing the bar exam in 1907. Becoming heavily involved in politics he served as assistant secretary of the navy under Woodrow Wilson and ran as the vice president on the Democratic ticket for the 1920 election. It was a dismal failure and the Democratic Party lost by a wide margin.

A defining factor in Roosevelt's life, and one that almost made his political aspirations come crashing down, was his battle with polio. Diagnosed from 1921 he completely lost the use of his legs and took measures to not appear in public in a wheelchair, feeling self-conscious and thinking that it would make him look weak. Although he was never able to recover the use of his legs, he did manage to walk short distances with the help of some crutches and steel braces, though that is not to say he didn't try every possible cure available to him, even going so far as to purchase Warm Springs resort in Georgia, which would later be open to other patients. While his personal efforts were unsuccessful his work would help thousands of other sufferers battle the affliction and he would also later help fund a vaccine.

While still struggling with health issues FDR was convinced to make a return to politics and in 1928 he became the governor for the state of New York. From here he had a great opportunity to win the presidential election in 1932. He was inaugurated in 1933 as the 32nd president of the US.

Roosevelt is often praised for his foresight into future events, the most significant example being the rise of Nazi Germany and the danger this posed to democratic countries all over the world. As the United States had adopted

> Roosevelt was the first president in history to make his inaugural address over the radio. Citizens from all over the country tuned in just to hear his famous speech

Defining moment

Diagnosed with polio

August 1921

It would be in Campobello Island, Canada where FDR would hear this life-changing news. Losing the use of his legs dashes his political aspirations and Roosevelt resigns himself to living the life of a patient, but Eleanor persuades him to continue on his career path. Although the many forms of treatment he would try would not return his leg function, he teaches himself to walk short distances with leg braces and a pair of crutches. For the rest of his life he would be a strong supporter of polio research and would open a treatment centre for patients at Warm Springs, Georgia.

Timeline

1896

- **A rude awakening**
  After being home schooled for years FDR is sent to board at Groton School in Massachusetts. Due to this, and his privileged upbringing, he found it difficult to fit in and make friends.
  1896

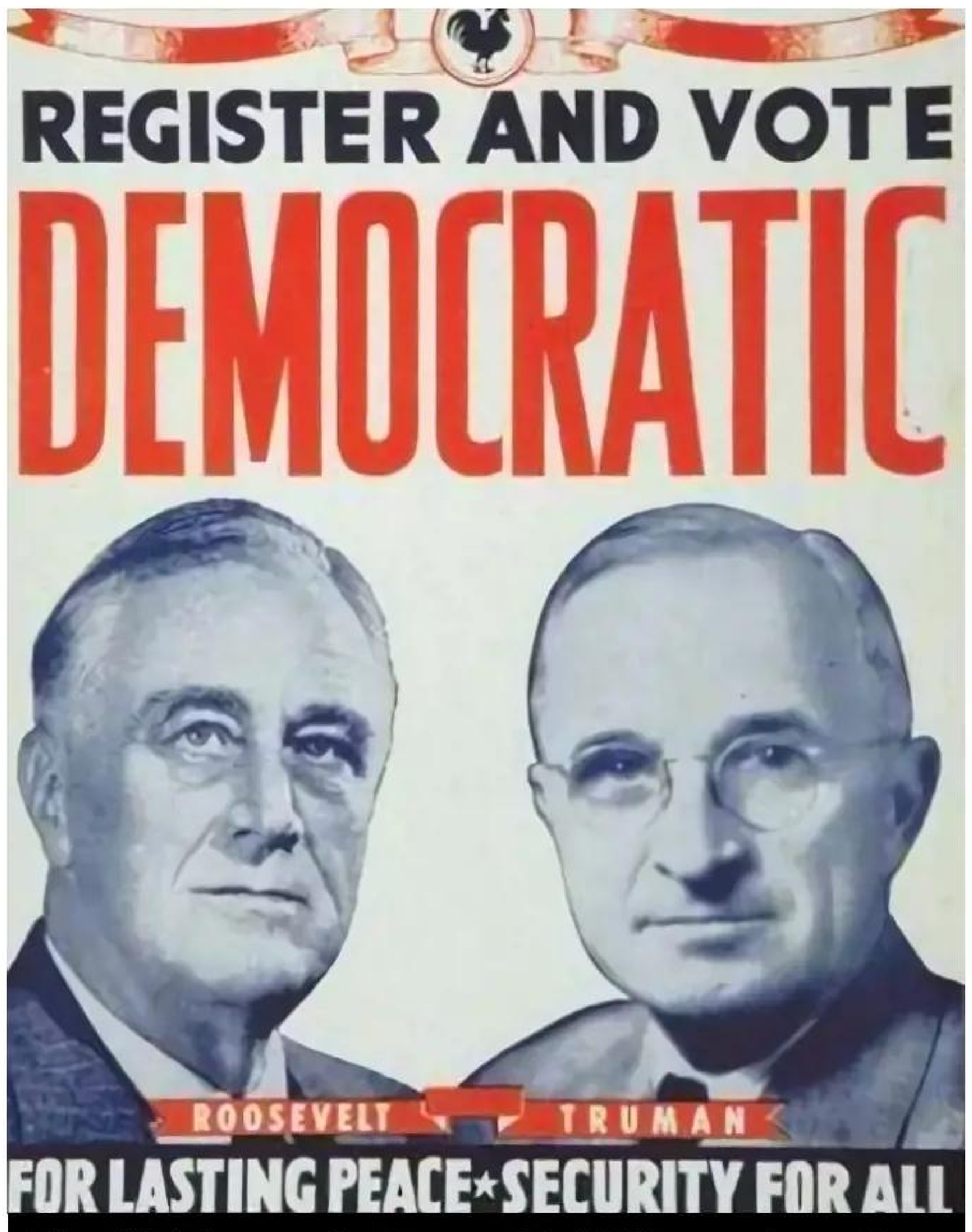
- **Graduated Harvard University**
  Surprisingly Roosevelt did not excel while at Harvard and was by all accounts a rather average student. After taking four years of economics classes Roosevelt reportedly said "Everything I was taught was wrong".
  24th June 1903

- **Tying the knot**
  FDR marries his sweetheart, Eleanor Roosevelt, a niece of ex-president Theodore Roosevelt and his fifth cousin once removed. The two would have a marriage complicated by an overbearing mother and Franklin's infidelities.
  17th March 1905

- **Passes New York state bar examination**
  After graduating and passing the bar exam Roosevelt takes a position at Carter Ledyard & Milburn, a highly prestigious Wall Street law firm that deals mainly with corporate law cases.
  1907

- **Appointed assistant secretary of the Navy**
  A firm believer that the US needed a larger naval presence, Roosevelt took to this position with fervour, earning him a reputation as an energetic and hard-working Democratic man.
  April 1913

- **Nominated to run as vice president**
  Roosevelt is named as the Democratic vice presidential candidate alongside James M Cox, but the pair lose the 1920 election to Republicans Warren G Harding and Calvin Coolidge.
  1920



The official poster for Roosevelt's 1944 campaign with Harry S Truman. He would go on to win a landslide victory and secure his fourth term in office

> "His influence was cemented as the US established itself as a world power"

a strict isolationist policy he could not openly help the Allied powers of Europe fight against Germany without risking the wrath of Congress and the American people. He wanted to ready the country for war without going against American neutrality. In 1940, a peacetime draft called the Selective Training and Service Act was enforced. To quell rising fears from the population he promised the parents of the United States that he would not send their sons to fight in foreign wars. However when the US finally entered World War II he claimed that it didn't count as a foreign war as it encompassed the globe - this was thought to be a rather Machiavellian move by his critics.

Roosevelt also began a constant stream of correspondence with British prime minister Winston Churchill so that he was kept up to date with events across the Atlantic. Not wanting to wait to take action, he decided that the United States would be the 'Arsenal of Democracy' - if the country couldn't openly fight, it could at least supply those that did. Roosevelt achieved this goal via the lend-lease programme, in which the United States supplied aid in the form of oil, food, war planes, ships, munitions and materials with terms stating that the supplies be used until returned or destroyed. A total of $50 billion worth of cargo was shipped out of the US, mostly to Britain but also to China, France and the USSR.

This aid would have to reach Europe by ship and so began a huge operation where tons of supplies were ferried across the Atlantic. Roosevelt knew these convoys were tempting targets for prowling German U-boats, but if an American ship was attacked then it would enable him to declare war without fear of a backlash. On 7th December 1941, however, Japan bombed the American navy at Pearl Harbor. This single act immediately galvanised the public and put the whole country behind the president when war was declared the following day.

> This president was not shy about the fact that he enjoyed a drink, so much so that he is sometimes credited with popularising the dirty Martini cocktail

After 12 years in the White House, Roosevelt's influence was cemented as the US emerged from the ashes of WWII to establish itself as a world power. His foresight would come into play again as he was instrumental in the construction of the United Nations. Unfortunately he would never see it come to fruition as he died on 12th April 1945.

During his final years FDR cut a gaunt figure as his health rapidly deteriorated. He was kept from the public eye so as to not cause panic or lower morale in the war years, and so when his death came just months after the commencement of his unprecedented fourth term in office it shocked the nation.

This was a man who had taken the reins during the Great Depression, stood up for the working man and given the country jobs, financial security and most importantly, a future. Hailed as a hero of the American people, he won the hearts of the population by promising and delivering fast and effective action time and time again.

Defining moment

Elected president of the United States

8th November 1932

Having a strong political base in the most populated state put Roosevelt on good footing for the presidency. In his nomination speech, he stated "This is more than a political campaign. It is a call to arms." Focusing on the citizens hit hardest by the recession, the Democratic Party found new allies in the workers' unions, minority groups and the more impoverished US citizens. With this charged electorate Roosevelt went on to win in all but six states and with 57 per cent of the vote, making him the 32nd president of the United States.

Roosevelt rides with outgoing president Herbert Hoover on the day of his inauguration in 1933

Defining moment

A date that will live in infamy

7 December 1941

With the surprise attack on the US naval base of Pearl Harbor by the Empire of Japan, the United States loses interest in its isolationist policy and rallies behind its president. Having already signed the lend-lease to other allied countries, the US had forgone its neutrality with entering into army conflict. The unprovoked attack on US sovereignty, however, could not be ignored and whatever dealings that Roosevelt had previously been making under the table were no longer necessary. The United States were now fully committed to the war effort and it would be four costly years until the hostilities would cease.

1945

- **Elected governor of New York state**
  Roosevelt sets out as a reform governor and establishes new social policies. Some of these prove unpopular as a bomb was found addressed to him but was defused before it went off.
  4th November 1928
- **Champions the 'First Hundred Days' programme**
  By closing the banks on a special 'bank holiday' and convening Congress to pass the Emergency Banking Act, FDR helps to stabilise the recession and restore some measure of public trust.
  5th March 1933
- **Re-elected for a second term**
  Buoyed by his successes and public support Roosevelt smashes the election with 60 per cent of the vote and carries all but two states: Vermont and Maine.
  3rd November 1936
- **Astoundingly re-elected for a third term**
  At the time, presidents serving for two terms was an unwritten rule, so to run for a third was a great risk. Roosevelt says he will only run if he has the backing of the party. "We want Roosevelt… the world wants Roosevelt" was the reply.
  5th November 1940
- **Successfully re-elected for a fourth term**
  With WWII raging the American people once again choose the leader who has seen them through some of the darkest times in US history, with the knowledge that he would continue to do so.
  7th November 1944
- **A death that shook the nation**
  The death of Franklin D Roosevelt is felt both at home and abroad. It rocks the country to its very foundation and a great sense of loss is felt by every American.
  12th April 1945

1922 – 1952

The Man of Steel

The world's fate was decided by the contest between a butcher and a monster. This is the story of the butcher: Joseph Stalin

On 18th December 1878, the man who would be known to history as Joseph Stalin was born Ioseb Dzhugashvili. The name is Georgian, for this most implacable of Russian rulers was not himself Russian. His father was a cobbler and his mother a washerwoman. Stalin's father was a drunk who beat his son. The family spoke only Georgian and Stalin himself only learned to speak Russian at school; he never lost his thick accent. The young Stalin was bullied, while the smallpox he contracted at the age of seven permanently scarred his face and an accident at 12 left his left arm shorter than his right arm. But the boy was immensely strong and tough, and he learned to hide his feelings, while storing revenge in his heart. The culture into which he was born had a strong tradition of blood feuds and the young Stalin took its lessons to heart: never forget and never forgive, but wait, sometimes for years, to take revenge.

Stalin's devout mother wanted him to be a priest and in 1895, aged 16, sent him to the Russian Orthodox Seminary at Tiflis, capital of Georgia. It didn't work: the young Stalin became an atheist, saying, "You know, they are fooling us, there is no God." But in losing one religion, Stalin gained another: communism. At the seminary, he read the works of Lenin and Marx, and joined one of the proto-Bolshevik groups. The seminary finally expelled Stalin in 1899 and his involvement in revolutionary politics deepened, leading him to become, in 1902, a full-time revolutionary, living off crime and hand-outs. As an agitator and revolutionary, the young Stalin came often to the attention of the Tsar's secret police: he was arrested seven times between 1902 and 1913, being sent into internal exile within the vast boundaries of the Russian Empire. Stalin always seemed able to escape, however, leading to rumours that he was working as a double agent for the Tsarist secret police.

In 1906, Stalin married for the first time. His wife, Ketevan Svanidze, gave birth to a son, Yakov, but died from typhus in 1907. Stalin was grief-stricken. At her funeral he said, "This creature softened my heart of stone. She died and with her died my last warm feelings for humanity." And when it came time for Svanidze to be buried, Stalin threw himself into the grave; only the approach of the secret police brought him to himself, and he fled.

It was after his wife's death that Ioseb Dzhugashvili took the name Stalin. In Russian, it means 'man of steel'.

Stalin's rise up the Communist Party hierarchy was slow but steady. In between periods of exile, he edited the party newspaper *Pravda* and in 1917 he was elected to the party's Central Committee. With the abdication of the Tsar on 15th February

JOSEPH STALIN

Communist, 18th December 1878 - 5th March 1953

Brief Bio

For 30 years, Joseph Stalin was the hard man of the Soviet Union; the absolute ruler whose face was put, like Big Brother, on every wall. In pursuit of his plans, Stalin killed millions of Russians. In the conflagration of World War II, Stalin faced Hitler in a contest of dictators that would determine the course of history.

Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference on 1st August 1945

Life in the time of Joseph Stalin

The Gulags

The Gulags were the forced-labour camps where Stalin incarcerated political opponents and petty criminals. Estimates vary, but it's likely that 14 million were imprisoned in the camps, and an additional 10 million sent into labour colonies and exile. The work was so brutal and the conditions so tough that about ten per cent of the inmates of the Gulags died each year.

The NKVD

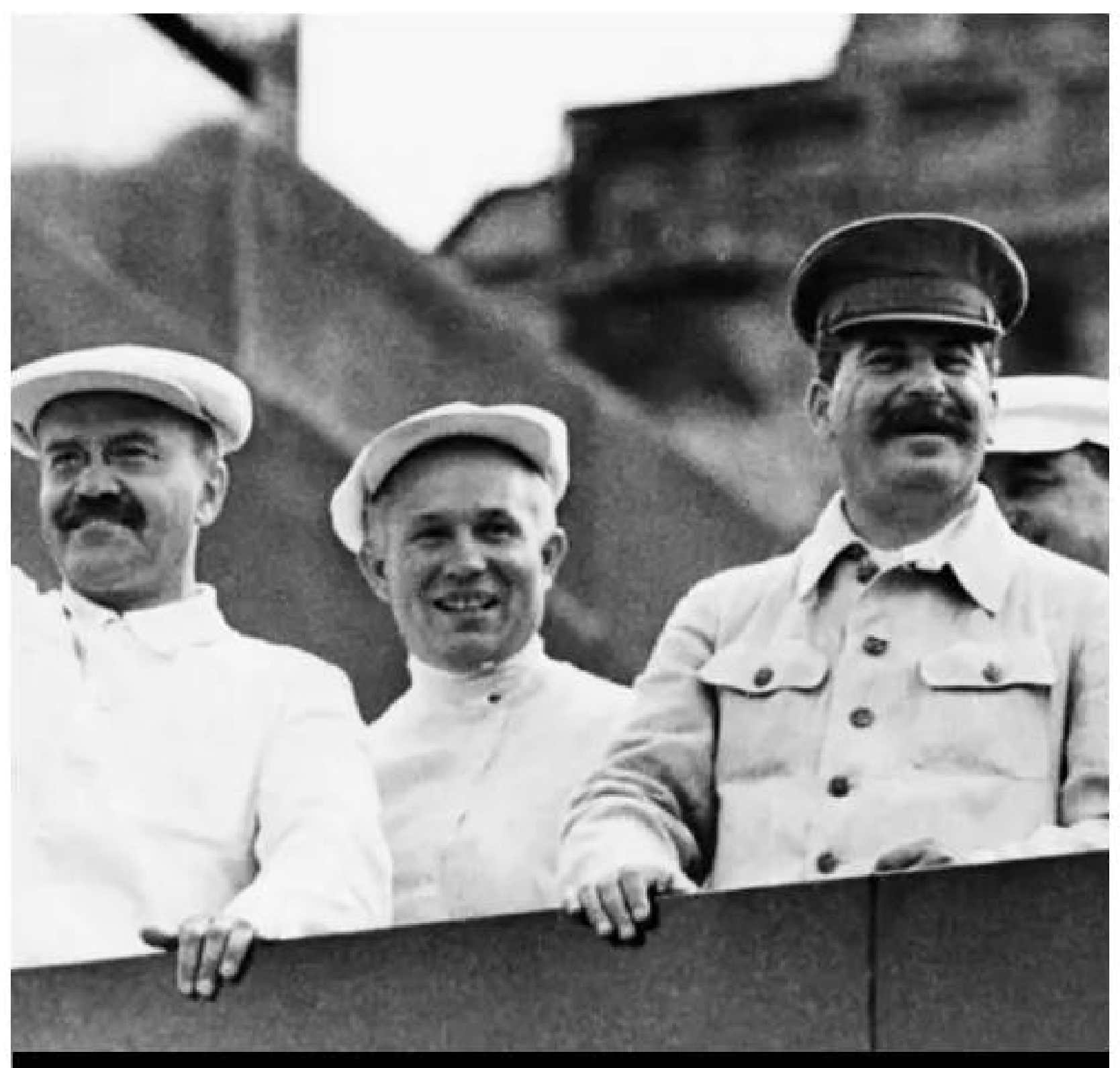
The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or NKVD, was formed in 1934 and merged into successor secret police organisations in 1946. But during those 12 years it was the chief instrument of Stalin's repression, running the Gulags, conducting show trials and executing anyone whom Stalin saw as a threat. Their favoured method of execution was a bullet in the back of the head of a man made to kneel.

Show trials

A key feature of the Great Terror were the show trials held in Moscow between 1936 and 1938. In these trials, the most high-profile of the men Stalin wished to destroy – all the Bolsheviks who had fought alongside him in the 1917 Revolution – were put on public trial accused of increasingly outlandish crimes, including plots to assassinate Stalin. The trials were characterised by public confessions, protestations of recovered loyalty to Stalin and the execution of the defendants. At the time, many Western observers believed the trials to be fair, unaware of how the NKVD had broken down the defendants by interrogation and torture before the trials.

How Stalin did business

Stalin's Soviet Union was probably the most thoroughgoing autocracy in history but he still needed people to convey his will to the country. As Stalin aged, he conducted more business from his dacha, his country house outside Moscow, or over dinner at the Kremlin. Stalin preferred to sleep through the day and work through the night, so his inner circle was often summoned to begin their day in the evening – often beginning with a cowboy film in the Kremlin movie theatre. As the movies were in English, a Politburo member translated the film into Russian as they watched. The film over, Stalin would have dinner with his officials after midnight, and then demand that they stay with him through the night. While Stalin himself drank in moderation, he would insist his party comrades knocked back the vodka – drunkenness revealed weaknesses that he could later use against them. As part of his rituals of control, Stalin would humiliate his officials in front of the gathering, on one occasion forcing the 60-year-old Nikita Khrushchev to dance a Ukrainian folk dance. Khrushchev would later succeed Stalin as ruler of the Soviet Union but, as he said, "When Stalin says dance, a wise man dances." Another reason for Khrushchev's survival was that he took day-time naps to make sure not to fall asleep during these late-night sessions. As he noted later, "Things went badly for those who dozed off at Stalin's table."



Dressed up to watch an athletic parade through Moscow in 1936, Stalin stands out from his foreign minister Molotov (far left) and his eventual successor, Nikita Khruschev (centre)

When Nikolai Yezhov (right), head of the NKVD, was purged, all traces of him were expunged from records

1917, the future of Russia was up for grabs and Lenin was determined to grasp it. Launching the second phase of the Russian Revolution, Lenin made his bid for power.

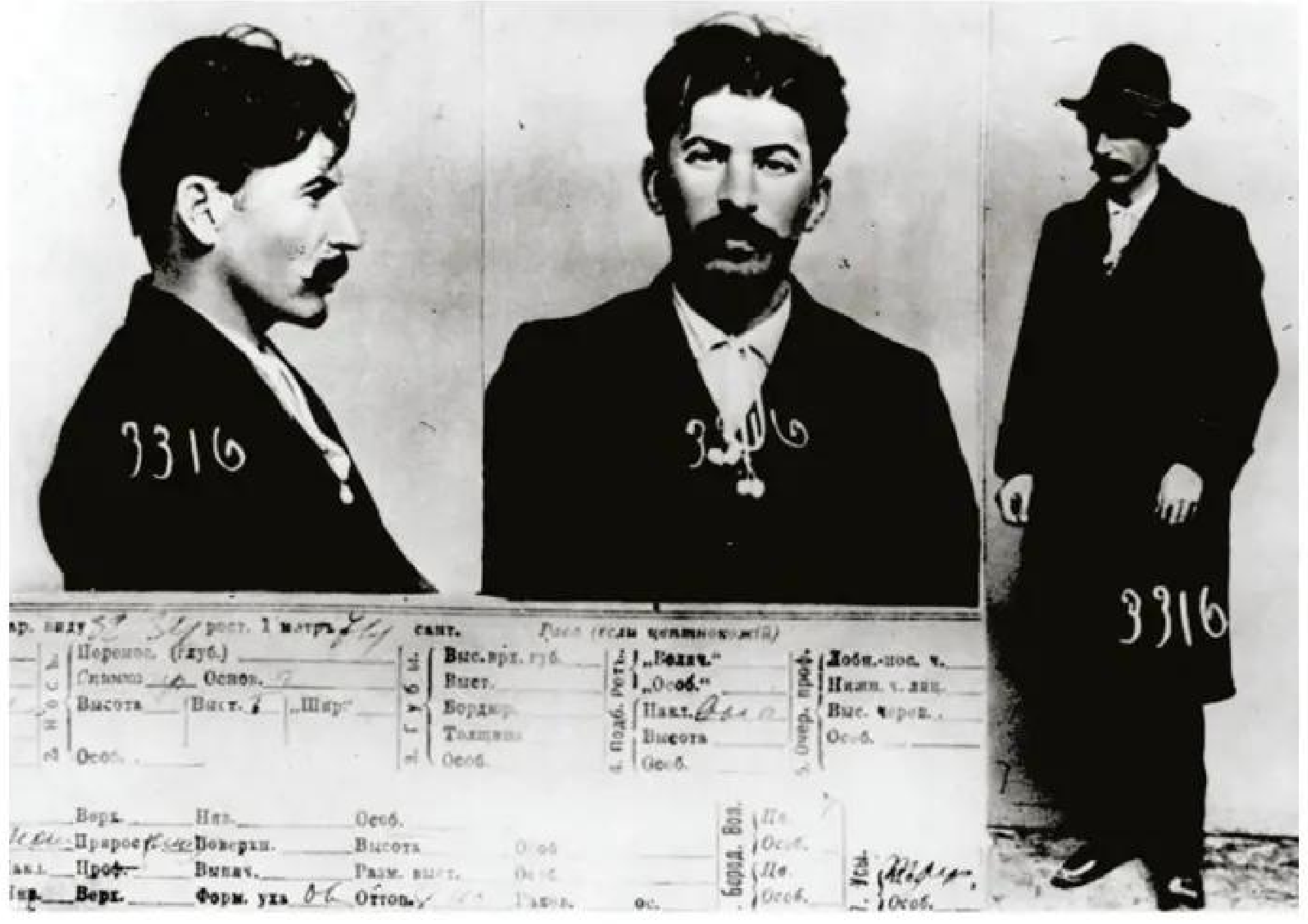
In the battle of colours, the Reds defeated the Whites (communists against anti-communists) and Lenin assumed control. In the confused fighting and in-fighting of the next five years, Stalin did little to distinguish himself beyond displaying a particular ruthlessness towards deserters and enemies, but nevertheless Lenin appointed him General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. This enabled Stalin to place allies into many important positions in the party.

Lenin was forced into semi-retirement by the strokes he suffered in May and December of 1922. Although he turned against Stalin in the final two years of his life, Stalin was able to suppress Lenin's criticism of him so that when Lenin died, on 21st January 1924, he was able to win the subsequent power struggle, gradually concentrating power in his own hands.

Initially, Stalin saw the main threat to his power as coming from the Old Bolsheviks: the committed communist revolutionaries who had helped Lenin push through the Russian Revolution. Stalin moved to isolate them: Trotsky was exiled, while others were stripped of power. But even removed from power, Stalin's paranoia still saw the Old Bolsheviks as possible centres of opposition and between 1934 and 1939 he moved to liquidate every possible opponent to his rule, in a period that came to be called the Great Terror. The Old Bolsheviks were, one by one, arrested, tortured and then put on show trials where they confessed to a series of bizarre crimes against the Soviet Union, while professing their undying love for Stalin. Their encomiums to Stalin were given in return for promises that their families would go unharmed after their executions but frequently no sooner had the Old Bolsheviks been executed than Stalin broke his promise and executed their relatives.

The man without mercy had already displayed his utter ruthlessness. In collectivising agriculture, Stalin liquidated an entire class of Russian peasantry, known as the Kulaks, while the famine in the Ukraine that killed approximately 5 million people was the result of deliberate government policies. Historians now estimate that Stalin was responsible for the deaths of 15 million of his own countrymen during his 30 years in power.

Stalin married again in 1919. His second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, gave him two children, a



Defining moment

The Young Revolutionary

1902

After leaving the seminary, Stalin embraced revolutionary politics and soon came to the notice of the Tsar's secret police. After organising strikes and demonstrations against the Tsar, Stalin was detained by the police and spent a year in prison before escaping early in 1904. In 1907, Stalin masterminded a bank robbery to obtain funds for his revolutionary work. As this mugshot shows, Stalin deliberately chose a slovenly and unprepossessing appearance, marking himself as a man apart from the usually impeccably dressed Marxist intellectuals. Stalin was deliberately rejecting middle-class values and portraying himself as a man of the people.

Timeline

1879

- **Birth**
  Stalin's birth was as unpropitious as Napoleon's. Born in Georgia into a poor family, a long way from the centre of power and influence, nobody would have foreseen the impact he would have on history.
  18th December 1879

- **Marriage**
  For the first and only time in his adult life, Stalin lets someone else into his heart. When his wife, 'Kato' Svanidze, died on 5th December 1907, Stalin permanently closed himself to any future human vulnerability.
  29th July 1906

- **Climbing the Tree**
  When civil war broke out after the October Revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to power, Lenin appointed Stalin to a five-man Politburo alongside Trotsky. Stalin was now very near the centre of power in the new Russia.
  1917

Defining moment

Mastery 1924 - 1929

Lenin died on 21st January 1924. Stalin had manouevred himself into being Lenin's likely successor, which enabled him to suppress Lenin's criticism of him in the final testament Lenin had prepared. During the next five years, Stalin gradually isolated and removed his rivals in the Central Committee. Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party and went into exile, while men like Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had helped him against Trotsky, were themselves expelled from the party and only allowed to rejoin after they had submitted themselves totally to Stalin. Stalin was now more master than the Tsar had ever been.

Stalin at the 14th Congress of the Communist Party in 1925. This was a gathering of delegates from the Communist Party, and was ostensibly the supreme governing body of the party, from which all policies were handed down

son and a daughter, but family life was strained and Nadezhda committed suicide in 1932. Stalin lived entirely for himself and had no interest in founding a dynasty; his children were not favoured. Yakov, his son by his first wife, also attempted suicide but missed; Stalin merely commented, "He can't even shoot straight." Yakov subsequently fought in the Soviet Army during World War II and was captured, dying in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Vasily, his son by Nadezhda Alliluyeva, survived him but died from chronic alcoholism just before his 41st birthday, while his only daughter, Svetlana, eventually defected to the West, fleeing to America in 1967.

By the late 1930s, Stalin knew that he would have to face, at some point, a showdown with Hitler's Germany. But, preoccupied by internal politics and convinced that the pact his foreign minister, Molotov, had signed in 1939 would ensure German non-aggression, Stalin refused to listen to the increasingly agitated warnings of his military. When German forces rolled into Russia in June 1941, Stalin was caught completely unaware and was initially paralysed by indecision. But with the Germans pursuing brutal policies of ethnic cleansing, Stalin was able to rally the Russian people in what is known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. In the great battles of Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad, Hitler's armies were destroyed, and the Red Army began its relentless advance westwards.

With the Soviet Union bled white by its losses during the war, Stalin was determined to ensure that the countries the Red Army occupied became satellite states of the Soviet Union. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, Stalin set out his terms and by 1946 Winston Churchill had learned enough to say that "an iron curtain" was being drawn across European continent. Stalin imposed communist governments on the countries of Eastern Europe, effectively drawing them under his control, while the former allies gazed with suspicion upon each other through the new curtain.

> "The young Stalin took to heart the lessons of the blood feud: never forget and never forgive"

Communist sympathisers in America had passed enough information to the Russians for them to develop and build their own atomic bomb by 29th August 1949. With the Soviet Union now armed with nuclear weapons too, the first phase of the Cold War began. Stalin imposed a blockade on the Allied sectors of Berlin but the Berlin airlift ensured that West Berlin remained an exclave within communist East Germany.

Despite his absolute mastery of the Soviet Union, Stalin remained paranoid and in the early 1950s began another purge. But before it could begin properly, Stalin was struck down by a stroke early on 1st March 1953. He'd given orders not to be disturbed when he went to bed so his guards left him undisturbed until 10pm of that day. He was found lying by his bed, unable to move or speak, his pyjamas soaked in stale urine. The man who had killed millions of his own people spent his last four days on earth trapped in his own body. Then, according to his daughter, his eyes opened for the final time with "a terrible look – either mad or angry and full of the fear of death". Stalin died at 9.50pm on 5th March 1953.

Defining moment

The Great Patriotic War

22nd June 1941 - 9th May 1945

Despite the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union with the express aim of destroying the country and ethnically cleansing vast areas of Russia. He was clear he was fighting a war of extermination. After the initial shock, Stalin rallied Russia in the Great Patriotic War. In this inferno, Stalin relaxed some of his old sanctions, allowing many churches of the Russian Orthodox Church to re-open and rewarding his best generals. Crucially, and unlike Hitler, Stalin quickly learned to leave the micro-management of the war to his generals, while retaining control of the overall strategy.

1953

Industrial Revolution
The Russia Stalin ruled was a largely pre-industrial country. Stalin was determined to change that, and began a process of centrally-planned industrialisation organised into five-year plans. It eventually worked, but at a great human cost.
1928 - 1938

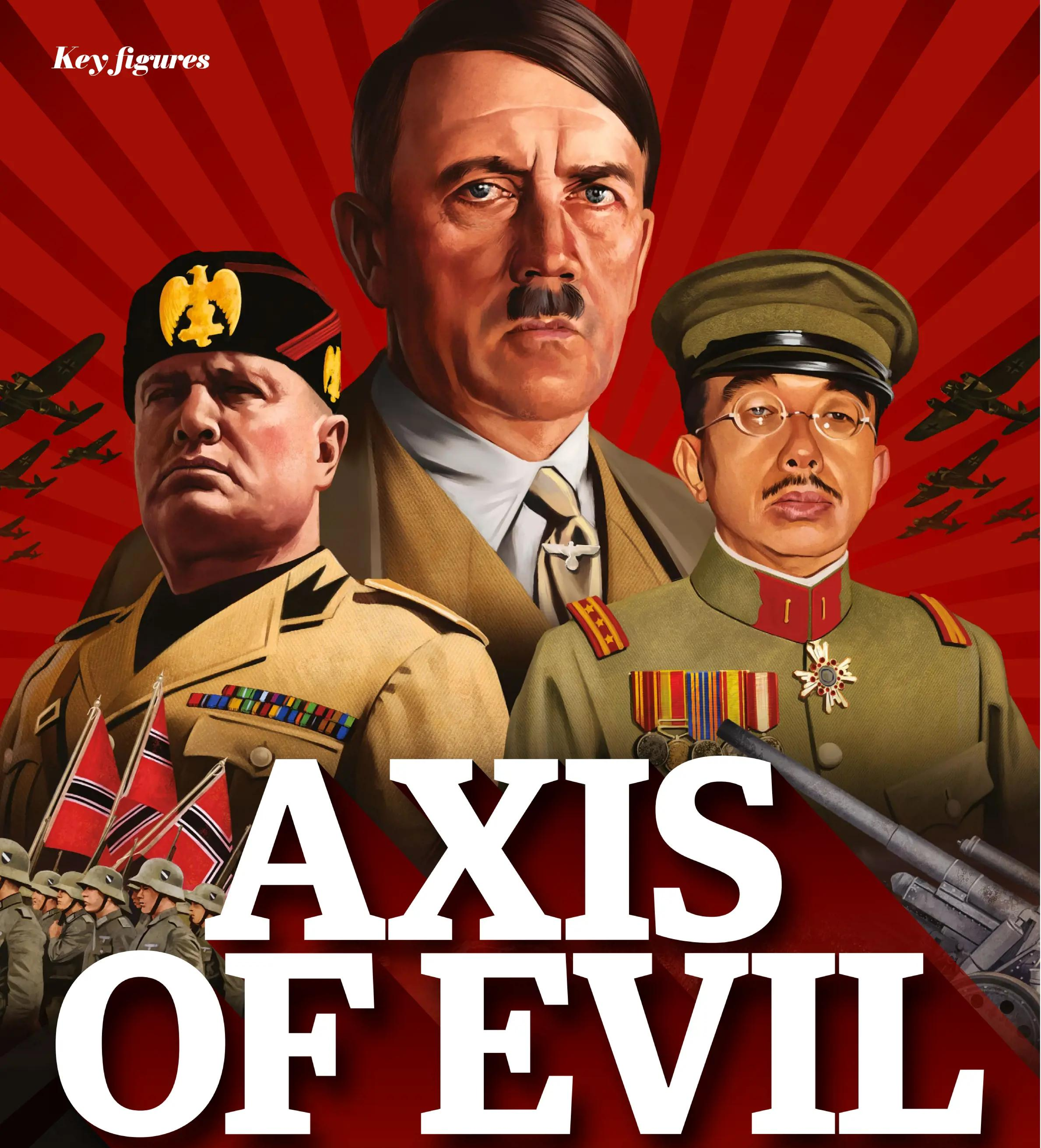
Collectivisation
To force food production upwards, Stalin instituted a policy whereby smallholdings of peasants were consolidated into massive, state-run farms. When targets were not met, he identified the Kulaks, wealthier peasants, as his obstacle and liquidated them.
1928 - 1940

The Terror
Stalin's paranoid mind turned towards eliminating any possible rival. So he began the Great Terror, liquidating all the surviving Old Bolsheviks and as purging upper levels of the army and the party.
1934 - 1939

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
The Nazi and Communist regimes, simultaneously watchful and fearful of each other, signed a non-aggression pact that also contained secret clauses carving up eastern Europe between them. Stalin invaded Poland 16 days after Hitler did.
23rd August 1939

Russia's bomb
The USA was the world's sole nuclear power for just four years. Thanks to extensive infiltration of the Manhattan Project, Soviet intelligence was able to provide enough information to Russian scientists for them to create their own atomic bomb.
29th August 1949

The End
After suffering a stroke on 1st March, Stalin was left trapped in his body while his magnates, terrified he might recover, dithered over sending for medical care. The fear he inspired condemned Stalin to four days of agony before he eventually died.
5th March 1953



AXIS OF EVIL

In the wake of World War I, ruthless ambition, dark determination and lust for power drove three men to plunge the world into an era of death and terror

GERMANY

One man's quest to reclaim Germany's honour

Everything was perfectly aligned for Adolf Hitler's rise to power. The army veteran had tasted the bitter pill of German defeat in World War I and witnessed the once great nation descend into a broken land that could barely feed its own people. Determined to rebuild the country, he joined the German Workers' party and his charismatic speeches soon caught the nation's attention. He was saying everything the struggling people wanted to hear – he promised them food, employment and, most importantly, reclaimed pride. The ranks of the Nazi party swelled and the people spoke; in July 1932 they voted Hitler and he was appointed chancellor.

In control of all of German life and having banned all other political parties, Hitler and his Nazi Party focused their efforts on unravelling the Treaty of Versailles. The Fuhrer legitimised his actions by claiming the treaty denied Germany adequate 'living space'. One by one, Hitler broke the post-war agreements. He withdrew the country from the League of Nations, built up the military and began to stretch Germany's legs, occupying the German Rhineland, annexing Austria and invading Czechoslovakia. He was testing his enemies. He had already angered France and Britain, who promised to declare war if he invaded Poland, and he was well aware that alone he didn't stand a chance of taking on the Soviet Union – his ultimate goal. Hitler was ruthless and power hungry, but he wasn't stupid. He knew he couldn't achieve his goals with German forces alone. He needed help. He needed allies.

Adolf Hitler 1889-1945

Leader of Nazi Germany, Commander in Chief

A corporal in the German army, Hitler earned many medals for bravery until he was supposedly injured in a mustard gas attack. Hitler then became involved in the German Workers' party and used his skill as an orator to dominate the political world.

NAZI HIGH COMMAND

Hermann Goering

1893-1946

Commander in Chief of the German Luftwaffe

A veteran ace fighter pilot of World War I, Goering was a close confidant of Hitler and quickly rose through the Nazi ranks. Although he enjoyed success after the attack on Poland, Goering later became consumed in fighting his rivals within the party.

Joseph Goebbels

1897-1945

Minister of Propaganda

Rejected by the army due to his clubbed foot, Goebbels' embittered feelings drove him to the Nazi party. He soon became one of the most powerful people in Nazi Germany, but his devious tactics earned him the nickname 'Poison Dwarf'.

MACHINES OF WAR

Messerschmitt Bf 109

A trailblazer of modern fighter planes of the era, the Bf 109 formed the backbone of the German air force. Originally used in the Spanish Civil War, this fighter plane was constantly developed and improved upon throughout the war. The Bf 109 became the most produced fighter aircraft in history and was supplied to many Axis countries, not just Germany.

STRENGTHS Small, fast, powerful, cheap to produce
WEAKNESSES Narrow wheel track making it unstable on ground, hard to control in high winds

Tiger I

When German forces encountered the impressive Soviet tanks during their invasion of the Soviet Union, they realised they would need to produce their own. The Tiger I was their answer. With a focus on firepower and armour, the Tiger I was employed on all German battlefronts. Five British Sherman tanks were generally needed to take down a Tiger I.

STRENGTHS Powerful 88m gun, near-indestructible armour
WEAKNESSES Limited mobility, frequent breakdowns, difficult to transport

Bismarck

One of the famous ships of the 20th century, Bismarck was one of the largest ships ever built by a European country and served as a symbol of Hitler's supremacy and power. In design Bismarck was a throwback to the ships of World War I, and at a massive 50,000 tons it defied the restrictions placed on the German Navy following the war.

STRENGTHS Supremely strong armour, speed, mobility
WEAKNESSES Lack of turret protection, steering issues made it difficult to keep on course

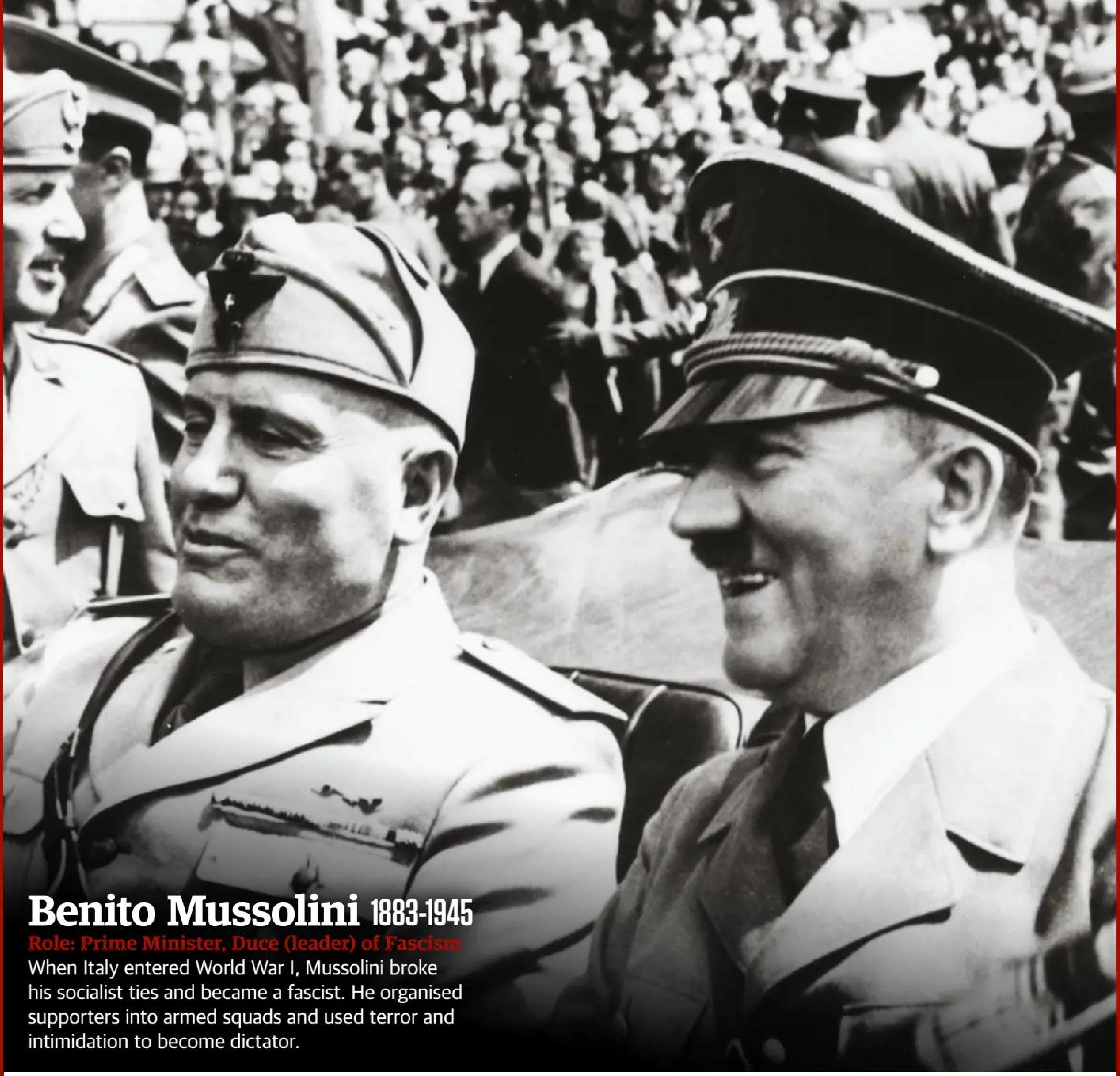
ITALY

The would-be Caesar desperate to carve out an empire to rule

Benito Mussolini had big plans for Italy. He was the father of the Fascist party and had built it from the ground up, swelling its ranks with embittered war veterans. By 1922 Italy had descended into political chaos and the king had no option but to appoint Mussolini prime minister. Mussolini was intelligent, shrewd and ambitious, and when his leadership brought new jobs to the unemployed, he became popular too. Mussolini was a war hero – he had fought on the front lines in World War I until he was injured – and the pride he wished to instil in his country drove his ruthless actions.

Mussolini believed it was his destiny to re-forge the Roman Empire with himself ruling as a modern-day Caesar. In 1935, he invaded Ethiopia with the full might of his army. The ill-equipped Ethiopians easily fell and the Italian Empire grew. When civil war broke out in Spain, Mussolini leapt on the opportunity to spread his influence and sent support to the fascists.

Mussolini was making enemies, and fast. But there was one nation that offered support – Nazi Germany. The ruthless actions of the Italian dictator caught Hitler's attention and he invited him to Germany, with aims to impress the brash Italian leader. Mussolini too had been paying close attention to Hitler. With the return of the Roman Empire as his aim, Mussolini was keen to hold a prime spot at the table if the world was to be carved apart. If it went well, the meeting of these two power-hungry dictators could be the beginning of a strong and dangerous partnership.



Benito Mussolini 1883-1945

Role: Prime Minister, Duce (leader) of Fascism

When Italy entered World War I, Mussolini broke his socialist ties and became a fascist. He organised supporters into armed squads and used terror and intimidation to become dictator.

FATHERS OF FASCISM

Italo Gariboldi

1879-1970

Role: Commander at the Battle of Stalingrad

Gariboldi's military skill saw him rise through the ranks of the Italian army, receiving several medals, including one for service in the bloody Battle of Stalingrad. By 1941 he was supreme commander of the Italian forces in Africa, and in 1942 he became the head of the army in Russia.

Ugo Cavallero

1880-1943

Role: Chief of Italian Supreme Command, Marshal of Italy

A talented tactician, Cavallero achieved success during World War I and became Mussolini's Undersecretary of War in 1925. When Italy entered World War II, he was made Commander in Chief of the Italian Supreme Command and was involved in many major battles.

MACHINES OF WAR

Macchi C.202 Folgore

This aircraft served as proof that the Italian air force was capable of producing a world-class fighter plane. The Folgore saw service on all the fronts where Italy fought during the war, proving itself a deadly foe.

STRENGTHS Speed, manoeuvrability
WEAKNESSES Under-gunned, inefficient oxygen system, unreliable radio

Zara-class cruiser

The Zara cruisers were developed to combat the latest French-designed cruisers. By using the French designs as a base, the Zara cruisers were heavily armoured and powerful. The British Navy struggled to match them when they faced each other in conflicts in the Mediterranean Sea.

STRENGTHS Heavy firepower, well armoured
WEAKNESSES Not able to carry radar

L3 tankette

This two-man tankette saw action before, during and after World War II. It was the most common Italian armoured fighting vehicle throughout the war, with between 2,000 and 2,500 L3 tankettes built in various models and also sold to a variety of countries.

STRENGTHS Cheap to produce, speed
WEAKNESSES Thin armour, weak firepower

MACHINES OF WAR

Mitsubishi Zero

A symbol of Japan's aerial power, the Zeroes served throughout the war from the attack on Pearl Harbor to the very last kamikaze missions. There were 11,283 produced between 1939 and 1945 and the planes were regarded as near invincible.

STRENGTHS Long range, manoeuvrability
WEAKNESSES Limited firepower, armour and engine power

Mitsubishi G4M Betty

Nicknamed the 'Flying Cigar' due to its shape, this Japanese bomber operated from the start of the war through to the end, with a total of 2,435 built.

STRENGTHS Incredible range, high speed
WEAKNESSES No armour plating or protection for crew, unprotected fuel tanks that easily ignited

Yamato

This gigantic battleship was the heaviest and most powerful armed battleship ever constructed. It was specifically designed to counter the United States' battleship fleet.

STRENGTHS Massive firepower, speed
WEAKNESSES Structural weaknesses in the armour made it susceptible to air-dropped torpedoes

Hirohito 1901-1989

Emperor of Japan, Commander of the Imperial General Headquarters

Hirohito became emperor in 1926. Although in theory he had extreme authority, he gave much of his power to ministers. As a result his personal involvement in Japan's expansionist policies remains a subject of debate.

LEADERS OF IMPERIALISM

Fumimaro Konoe

1891-1945

Prime Minister of Japan 1937-1941

Born to a noble family, Konoe was made premier in 1937. When Japanese troops clashed with Chinese he was keen to avoid an all-out war, and as the conflict escalated he resigned.

Hideki Tojo

1884-1948

Prime Minister of Japan 1941-1944, Minister of War

A decorated general, Tojo became prime minister after Konoe's resignation. He supported expansionist policies, was responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbour and pumped nationalist indoctrination into the education system.

JAPAN

The developing power striving for domination

Japan needed help. The country had undergone a dramatic industrialisation in the mid-19th century and now considered itself a major world player. The rest of the world, however, disagreed. Japan had played a part in the allied victory in World War I but the Western powers were wary of Japan's growing imperialist tendencies. Instead of forging powerful new alliances, Japan found its military limited and America even prohibited Japanese immigration into the country. To the Japanese nationalists these were racist actions, and those who could have been allies became enemies.

This was bad news for Japan. It was struggling under a domestic crisis and economic collapse flooded the country in a brutal depression. Control slipped away from the government and the military began to act alone. Eventually, even the role of prime minister was filled by an admiral. Desperately in need of natural resources and hungry for the power it felt unfairly deprived of, Japan undertook plans for a unification of Asia under Japanese leadership. This meant one thing - an invasion of their long-time rivals, China.

With domination of the Far East as their aim, Japan began an offensive against China that erupted into a full-blown war. The League of Nations criticised Japan, so the country simply left the League and continued its conquest. Although Japan occupied almost the entire coast of China, the Chinese government refused to surrender and the war continued. Japan, with its limited resources, was pushed to breaking point. The country needed resources. It was too late for Japan to make friends, but partnering with the enemies of its enemies was now a very appealing prospect.

THE TRIPARTITE PACT

27th September 1940

Japanese ambassador Saburō Kurusu, Italian foreign minister Galeazzo Ciano and Adolf Hitler sign a mutual defence treaty in Berlin. With this, the three nations agreed to unite against any aggressor who violated their sovereignty, officially making them allies in war. After this, Germany, Italy and Japan formally took the name 'Axis powers'.

A DEADLY ALLIANCE

A German general in an armoured car accompanying tanks in the invasion of Poland in 1939

Hitler spared no expense to ensure he impressed Mussolini. When the Italian leader met the German dictator, Hitler put on an elaborate show of his nation's power with a long parade of German troops and impressive demonstration of military equipment. It sent a strong message – this is the nation you want to fight with, not against. Italy agreed and Mussolini was impressed. Two months later in November 1936, Italy joined Germany and Japan in signing the Anti-Comintern Pact. Although appearing to aim at the communist international organisation Comintern, in reality the pact was directed towards the Soviet Union. By signing, the countries agreed if any of them should become involved in war with the Soviet Union they would consult on measures "to safeguard their common interests." On the outside it painted Hitler and Mussolini as crusaders defending Western values against communism, but in reality the pact fuelled their expansionist goals. It was the first sign of what would become known as the Axis powers.

By May 1939 Germany and Italy knew war was inevitable, and the countries again demonstrated their allegiance by signing the Pact of Friendship. The agreement committed the two nations to supply aid to the other if they found themselves at war. However, it also contained secretive protocols preparing Italy and Germany for a future European war they would wage together. Japan originally intended to sign this so-called 'Pact of Steel', but as the focus was aimed at Britain and France, not the Soviet Union, they declined. The wartime alliance was now a very real, tangible thing. But when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Italy was not ready. It needed years to train its army for war, so there was no way it could join the German invasion. In fact, Italy was not ready to declare war until June 1940, by which point Hitler had waged most of his war across Western Europe. However, this was irrelevant to Japan and Italy, as, conveniently, all Axis powers wished to obtain territory in different areas of the world.

Although they fought for domination in different arenas, the three leaders knew the power of presenting a united front, so on 27th September 1940 the Tripartite Pact was signed. The main aim of the pact was to keep the huge power of the USA out of the war. By signing the pact the powers agreed to unite against anyone who opposed the three nations, except for those already at war with them. It also established two spheres of influence, with Japan acknowledging Germany and Italy as the leaders of a new European order, and vice versa for Japan in East Asia. The message was clear – the three powers were now an alliance that would eliminate anyone who stood in the way of the creation of their new empires. What had begun as three separate states with grand ambitions had transformed into a united, deadly and dangerous force, prepared to take on the mightiest nations on earth. The Axis was born.

Austrian Nazis look on as Jews are forced to scrub the pavement

AXIS STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

+ Technology

German scientists and engineers were, at the beginning of the war, miles ahead of their Allied counterparts. They were already equipped with new technological advances like jets, synthetic oil and the latest rockets and bombs. These German scientists were so impressive that after the war they were employed by the Allies under 'Operation Paperclip'.

+ Numbers

The German army was already 3 million strong by 1936. Hitler had been preparing his forces for war years in advance, and it showed. For his 100 infantry and six armoured divisions in 1939, Great Britain had just ten. Italy too had one of the largest bomber forces in the world, while Japan boasted one of the largest navies.

+ Initiative

At the beginning of the war, the Axis felt the benefits of having the strategic initiative. While the Allies were still waiting to see how far Hitler would push his luck, the Fuhrer had already made plans to invade Poland and eventually the USSR. Initially the Allies had no choice but to wait and react to what their enemies did, putting the Axis in a very powerful position indeed.

− Lack of resources

The problem that fuelled the war for the Axis powers also plagued them throughout it. The three powers were going bankrupt, and as the war dragged on they struggled to obtain enough resources for their forces. By the time the conflict had ended, Germany didn't even have enough oil to fuel its airplanes.

− Sole command

Although this was initially an advantage, as Hitler was free to take whatever actions he saw fit, this came to be a major weakness as the war progressed. Hitler attempted to micro-manage all his battles, when in reality this job should have been handled by his skilled and talented generals – as in the Allied countries.

− Fractured alliance

The Axis aligned with each other, essentially, because their enemies were the same, and cracks gradually began to form. Italy was hesitant throughout the war due to its own lack of military strength. Hitler's early victories had inflated his ego and he was unwilling to compromise his goals. Japan was generally distrustful of any European power, allies or not. A true alliance was, ultimately, impossible.

AXIS DIPLOMACY

On the surface the Axis Powers were brothers united for a common cause, but just how close were these alliances behind closed doors?

Mussolini + Hitler

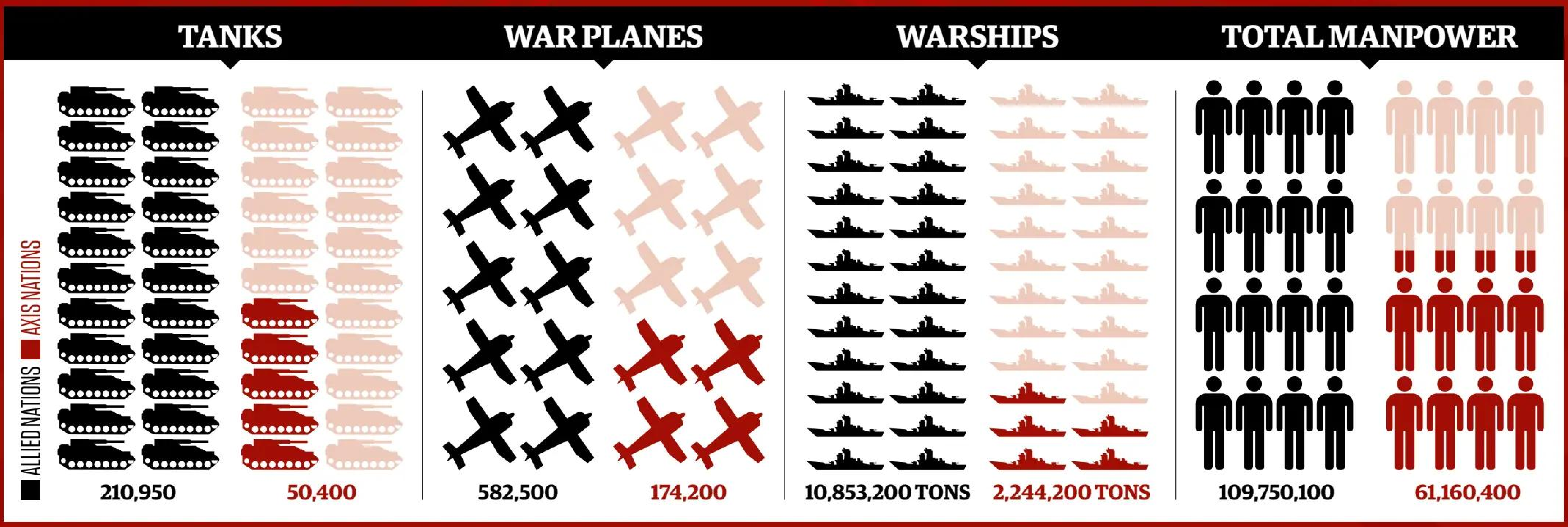
On paper the Fuhrer and the Duce should have got on well: Italian Fascism and Nazism were very similar ideologies, and Hitler was a great admirer of Mussolini. In reality, their relationship was a tense one. Mussolini immediately disliked Hitler. He described *Mein Kampf* as boring and refused to use a translator when they first met. Mussolini spoke little German and could barely understand Hitler's accent and after the meeting described the dictator as "a silly little monkey." This scorn was not helped by the fact that Mussolini did not agree with Hitler's extreme racial views. Despite their differences, they both realised that personal clashes were subservient to their political aims. Propaganda that displayed the two as friends was pumped out, and their alliance was one that was to alter the course of European history.

Hitler + Hirohito

There is no record of Hitler and the emperor meeting in person, and this fact is symbolic of their entire relationship. It was a friendship of convenience and, had it continued, might have ended disastrously. Despite dubbing the Japanese as 'honorary Aryans' to legitimise them as allies, in private he was recorded as saying: "Let us think of ourselves as masters and consider these people at best as lacquered half-monkeys who need to feel the knout." Japan was no better as they considered themselves racially superior to Europeans. However, both saw the advantages of having the other as an ally, and despite their differing racial views, the two leaders were almost mirror images of the other. Had the Axis clinched victory, the ultimate outcome of this relationship would have likely been very grim indeed.

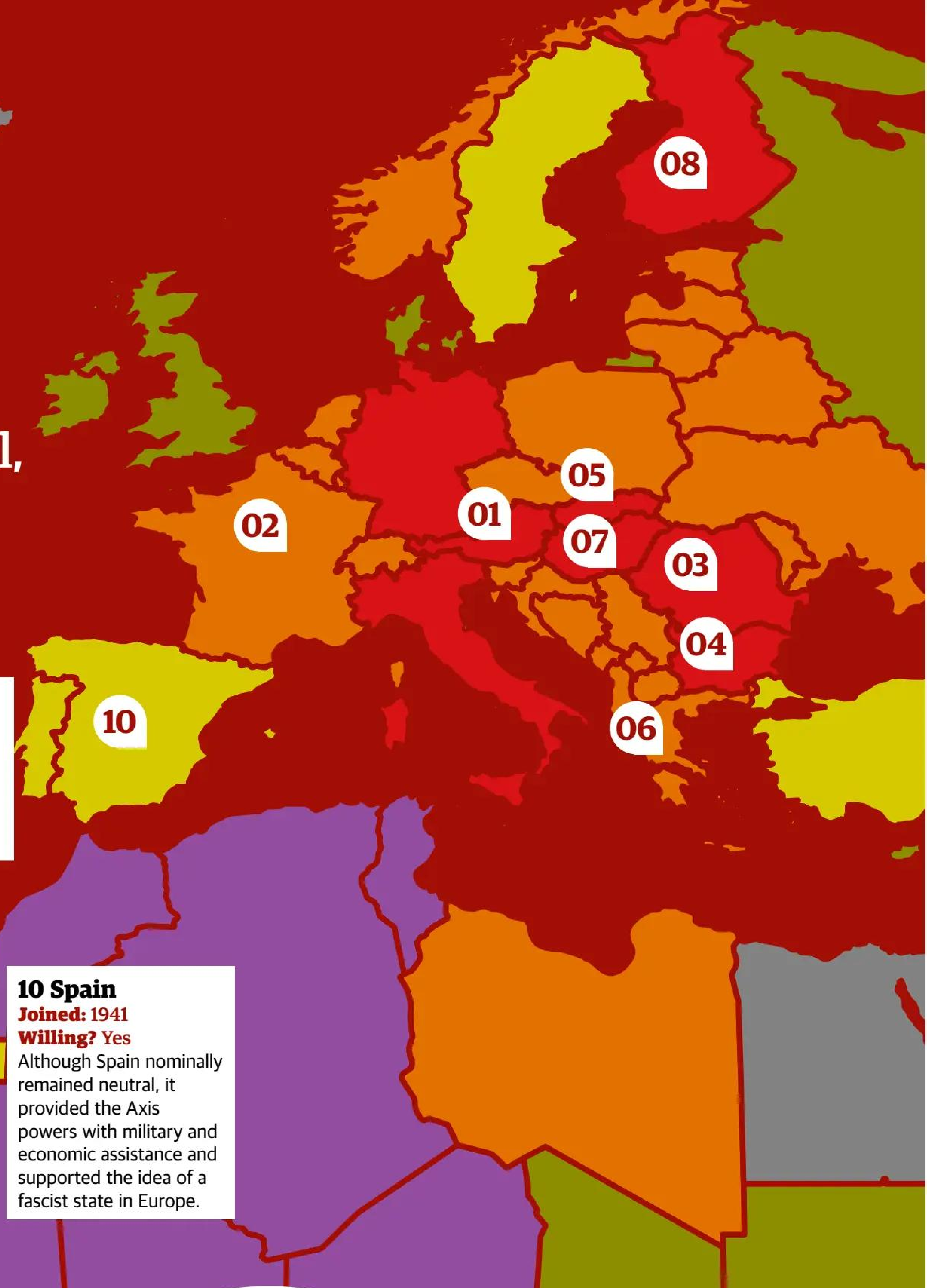
Mussolini + Hirohito

If there was little interaction between Hitler and Hirohito, there was even less between the Italian dictator and Japanese Emperor. It's unlikely the two had much, if any, communication. However, Mussolini was convinced of Japanese support, even when Hitler was dubious. Mussolini was especially delighted by the attack on Pearl Harbor as he viewed the US as cowards for not joining the war and approved that Japan forced their hand.



A WORLD DIVIDED

States slowly joined the forces of evil, some willing, some with no choice



02 Vichy France

Joined: June 1940

Willing? No

After the fall of France, a Vichy government was set up that collaborated with the Axis. However, it never became a full military partner as Hitler prevented the military from building strength.

10 Spain

Joined: 1941

Willing? Yes

Although Spain nominally remained neutral, it provided the Axis powers with military and economic assistance and supported the idea of a fascist state in Europe.

05 Slovakia

Joined: 24th November 1940

Willing? Yes

Slovakia was a close ally of Germany and entered into a treaty of protection with the country in 1939. Slovak forces were part of the invasion of Poland and declared war on the Soviet Union.

03 Romania

Joined: 23rd November 1940

Willing? Yes

Although originally starting as a neutral country, pro-fascist elements grew in popularity after the fall of France and a coup led to a military dictatorship, which aligned the country with the Axis powers.

06 Greece

Joined: April 1941

Willing? No

Greece was occupied by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany after the Invasion of Greece, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of civilians to starvation.

FORGING THE AXIS POWERS

19th September 1931
The Kwantung Army of Japan invades Manchuria. They will later create a puppet state named Manchukuo. Mussolini and Hitler watch closely as the League of Nations is powerless to stop the invasion.

3rd October 1935
Under Mussolini's instructions, Italy invades Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia). The League of Nations condemns the invasion and votes to impose sanctions, however these are largely ineffective.

25th October 1936
The Italian and German leaders sign a treaty that informally links the fascist countries, which will serve as the basis for the Rome-Berlin Axis.

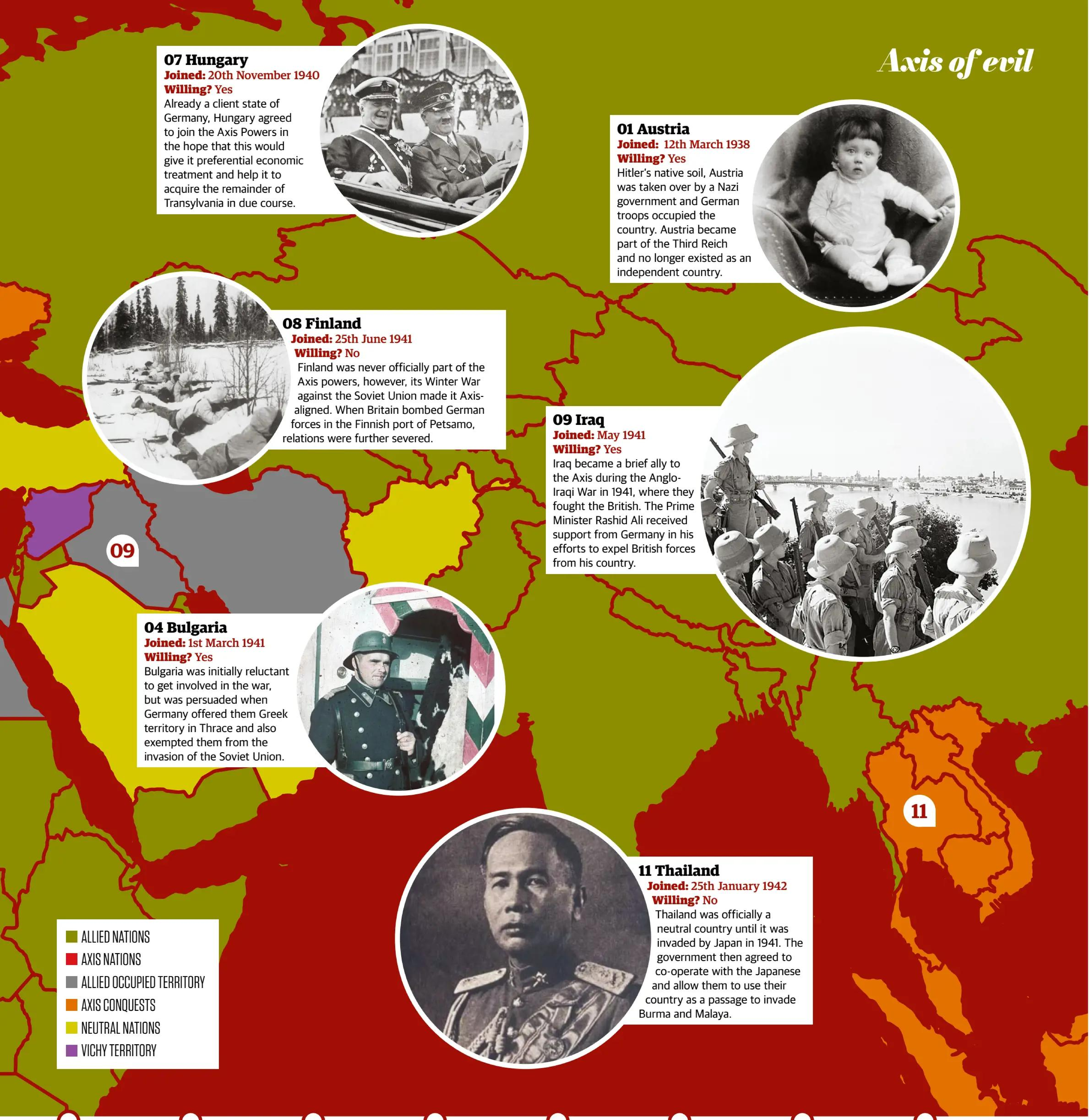
November 1937
The Anti-Comintern pact is signed – this extends the Rome-Berlin axis to Tokyo, and the three nations unite against the Soviet Union.

12th March 1938
The German army marches into Austria amid cheers and celebration. The country is then annexed into the Third Reich. The Allies do nothing to stop it, despite verbally condemning German expansion.

September 1938
The Munich Agreement is signed. It allows Germany to annex parts of Czechoslovakia. Churchill says: "England has been offered a choice between war and shame. She has chosen shame, and will get war."

1st September 1939
Germany and the Soviet Union invade Poland. By 6th October, the country will be divided between them.

9th April 1940
Germany invades Denmark and Norway in the early hours of the morning.



07 Hungary

Joined: 20th November 1940

Willing? Yes

Already a client state of Germany, Hungary agreed to join the Axis Powers in the hope that this would give it preferential economic treatment and help it to acquire the remainder of Transylvania in due course.

01 Austria

Joined: 12th March 1938

Willing? Yes

Hitler's native soil, Austria was taken over by a Nazi government and German troops occupied the country. Austria became part of the Third Reich and no longer existed as an independent country.

08 Finland

Joined: 25th June 1941

Willing? No

Finland was never officially part of the Axis powers, however, its Winter War against the Soviet Union made it Axis-aligned. When Britain bombed German forces in the Finnish port of Petsamo, relations were further severed.

09 Iraq

Joined: May 1941

Willing? Yes

Iraq became a brief ally to the Axis during the Anglo-Iraqi War in 1941, where they fought the British. The Prime Minister Rashid Ali received support from Germany in his efforts to expel British forces from his country.

04 Bulgaria

Joined: 1st March 1941

Willing? Yes

Bulgaria was initially reluctant to get involved in the war, but was persuaded when Germany offered them Greek territory in Thrace and also exempted them from the invasion of the Soviet Union.

11 Thailand

Joined: 25th January 1942

Willing? No

Thailand was officially a neutral country until it was invaded by Japan in 1941. The government then agreed to co-operate with the Japanese and allow them to use their country as a passage to invade Burma and Malaya.

10th May 1940
Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. On the same day, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigns and is replaced by Winston Churchill.

14th June 1940
French and Allied forces retreat as German forces march into Paris to little resistance.

6th April 1941
The Battle of Greece begins as Germany invades Greece. Greek troops find themselves outnumbered and the Axis occupies the country.

22nd June 1941
Under the codename Operation Barbarossa, Germany invades the USSR. The invasion represents Hitler's ultimate goal – the elimination of the communist threat and acquisition of land for German expansion.

8th December 1941 (local time)
Malaya is invaded by Japan. The battle is fought between the British Indian Army and the Empire of Japan. It is the first major conflict of the Pacific War.

7th December 1941 (local time)
Japan unleashes a surprise attack against the United States by bombing Pearl Harbour. The attack is planned to keep the US fleet from interfering in Japan's plans for expansion in Southeast Asia.

8th December 1941
Japan invades the Philippines just ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbour. The province of Bataan is captured by April, and Japan will occupy the country for three years.

28th June 1942
Germany begins a summer offensive towards the Soviet city of Stalingrad. The offensive will eventually be defeated at the Battle of Stalingrad on 2nd February 1943, turning the tides in the European theatre.

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MUSSOLINI'S DOWNFALL

Once the most powerful man in Italy, Il Duce met his end fleeing his country in disguise as the war drew to its bitter end

The hunched figure in the back of the German truck might not have merited a second glance had he not been wearing sunglasses. The Luftwaffe corporal, resting his chin on the sub-machine gun between his knees, was certainly not what the partisans of the 52nd Garibaldi Brigade were looking for. They were intent only on finding any fugitive Italians within the small column of German troops heading for home.

However, the sunglasses – worn on a cloudy day – attracted attention and a closer examination of the German corporal revealed the unmistakable features of Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini, former Prime Minister and dictator of Italy. It was 27th April 1945, and the story of 'Il Duce' ('the leader'), was coming to its conclusion.

The slow defeat

Mussolini had long sensed that his end was near. The war, never popular in Italy, had been going badly for some time. "From October 1942," he had commented, referring to the Allied victory at El Alamein, "I had a constant and growing presentiment of the crisis which was to overwhelm me."

In truth, it did not take a political savant to see that trouble was brewing. The Italian role in World War II had often bordered on the farcical. Very much a junior partner to the Germans, Italy had only declared war on France once it had been conquered. Subsequent military operations – including those in Albania and Greece – had been botched to the extent that German forces had been required to bail the Italians out.

A crossroads had been reached in May 1943, when the Allied victory in Tunisia removed Axis forces from North Africa. A difference of opinion divided the British and Americans at this point; the Americans favouring a concentration of force for the invasion of German-occupied France, while the British advocated delaying that and keeping the pressure on Germany through attacking its weaker partner.

The British plan prevailed, and Italy faced an uncertain future, but there was still hope that a destructive campaign on the Italian mainland might be avoided. As the first Allied strike began, against Sicily in July, one thing was clear; Il Duce's days as dictator were all but over. At a meeting of his own Grand Council, in the sweltering heat of a late July day and into the night, Il Duce was voted out of office.

Realising that he could ignore the vote of the council, he remained determined to hang on to power. His fate was sealed the next day, however, when he was arrested by the King, Victor Emmanuel III. Although the whole process was so polite and peaceful, Mussolini apparently failed to understand what was really happening to him, a mistake that would have dire consequences later.

Below: Italian partisans, aligned with the Action Party, patrol the streets of Milan after the city's liberation

Right: Mussolini was the figurehead of a cult of personality and represented the unifying force in Italian fascism

> "Mussolini had long sensed that his end was near. The war, never popular in Italy, had been going badly for some time"

On the day of his 60th birthday, Il Duce was in captivity on the island of Ponza, before being moved to an impressive suite at the Hotel Campo Imperatore, 1,800 metres up the Gran Sasso mountain in the Apennines. But the gilded cage would not hold the would-be imperator forever.

Italian surrender

Nobody, on either side, had any doubts that Italy would now try to extricate itself from the war. The critical factor in the tragic events that followed would be the German ability to act swiftly and decisively on that realisation.

While the Allies bogged themselves down in negotiations with the new government – led by Marshal Pietro Badoglio – over the terms of an Italian surrender, the Germans were already quietly moving troops into Italy.

When the inevitable armistice between Italy and the Allies was announced, the Germans were ready with Operation Achse, which saw German troops replace Italians in southern France, the Balkans and the Aegean. They also immediately disarmed more than half a million Italian troops in their native country – a staggering 56 divisions of the Italian Army were simply dismantled.

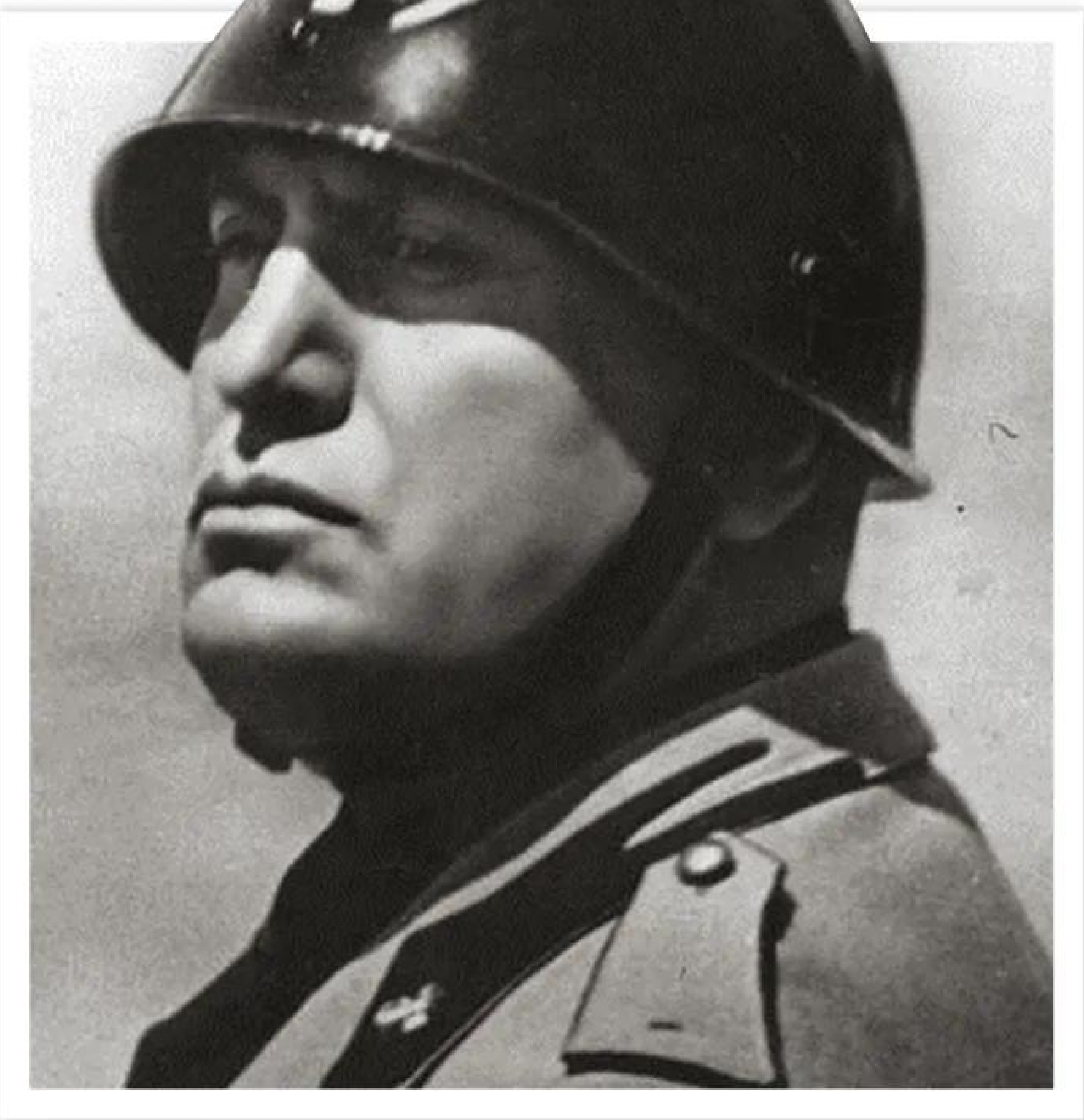
The Allies had clearly miscalculated the German response, but worse was to come. Rather than digging in on a defensive line to the north of Rome, as expected, the Germans chose to resist the Allied invasion. Getting underway just hours after the declaration of the armistice, on 9th September, the Allied landings at Salerno were fiercely contested from the start. Under Albert Kesselring, the Germans were prepared to make Allied forces pay for every inch of Italian territory they gained.

Mussolini was in a state of limbo at this point. Describing himself as, "a corpse whose death they hesitate to announce," he appeared to have lost the energy and passion that had marked out the early days of his career.

Under the terms of the negotiations with the Allies, he was meant to have been handed over when the invasion began, but the German response had been so swift that panic had struck the new Italian regime. Along with the King, Badoglio and the rest of the government had fled south from Rome on 9th September, forgetting all about the deposed dictator, whose life and career was about to enter its final, humiliating phase.

12 gliders, carrying over 100 German commandos, were dispatched to 'rescue' Mussolini, who was forced to leave his comfortable hotel in a dangerously overloaded Stork reconnaissance plane. Two days later, he was meeting the Führer. Hitler offered Mussolini a stark choice – either accept a position at the head of a new Italian government in northern Italy, or face the consequences. "Northern Italy," the Führer warned, "will be forced to envy the fate of Poland if you do not accept to give renewed vigour to the alliance between Germany and Italy, by becoming head of the state and of the new government." It was an unequivocal statement.

So began the last phase of Mussolini's career, as the head of a puppet regime. If he had felt like a corpse before, he was little more than a zombie now.



Above: Il Duce's control over Italy became absolute in 1925 when he dissolved the democratic government

"Many Italians had hoped that the armistice with the Allies would mean an end to their war. This was perhaps naïve, but few would have guessed that their struggle was just beginning"

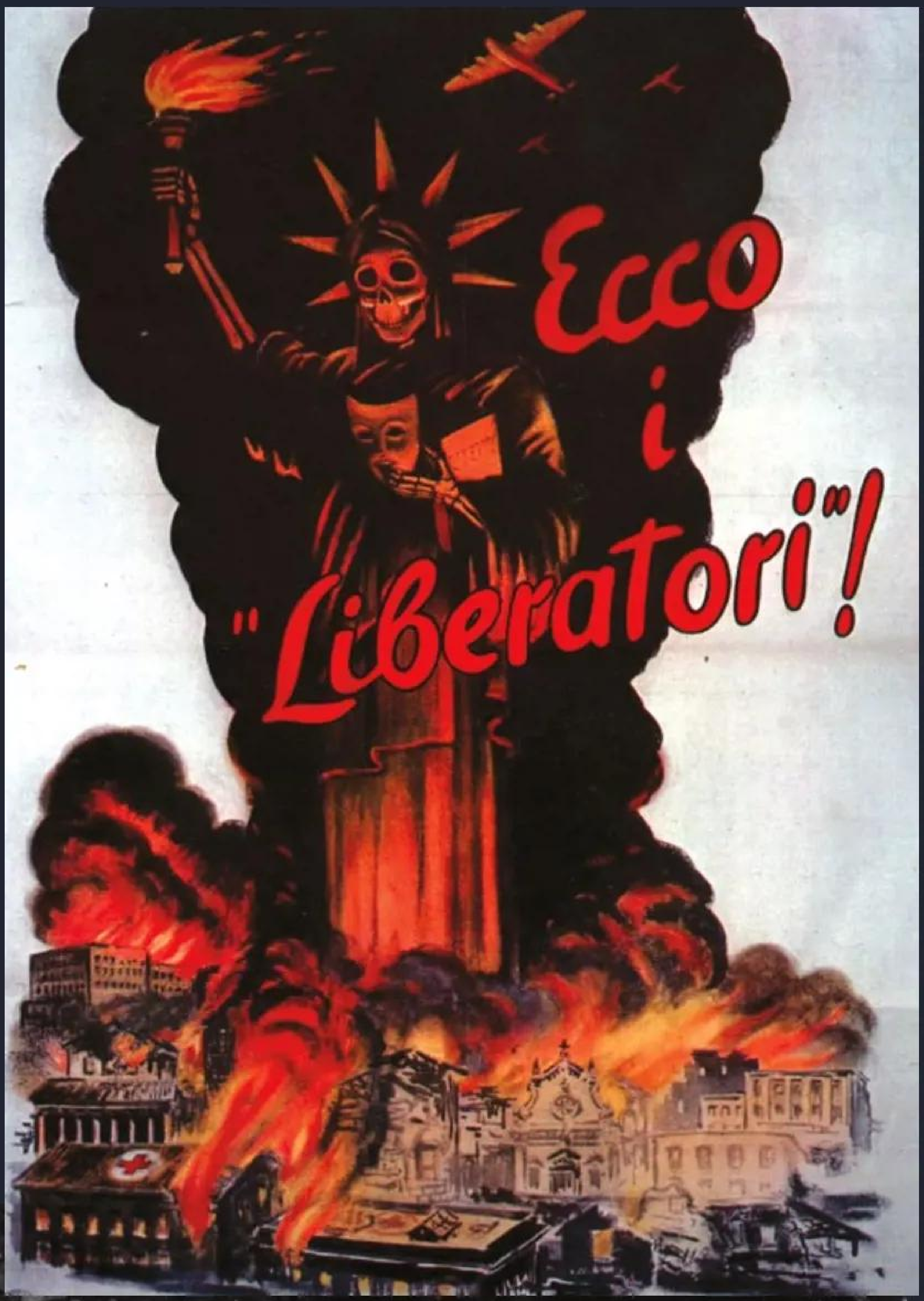
Below: Mussolini pictured with German and Italian troops in 1944. Units were receiving training in Germany to continue the fight against the Allies

"Germany is truly your friend"

Turning their backs on Nazi Germany had devastating consequences for the Italians

Posters may have declared that the Italians had nothing to fear from their long-time partners in the 'Pact of Steel', but the truth was very different. Upon surrendering, Italy became nothing more than a source of men and materials for Germany, to be plundered at will. Factories were packed up and shipped out of the country and Italy was even forced to pay 10 million lire per month as expenses. Even food was taken for German soldiers, leaving many on the brink of starvation. As well as the territory of the new Mussolini-headed government, the RSI, Germany also effectively annexed territories in the north east of the country, which conveniently coincided with territory taken from Austria at the end of World War I. An 'adviser', Rudolph Rahn, was installed as German Ambassador to the RSI, further undermining Mussolini's power. The great leader was now little more than a puppet.

> "Upon its surrender to the Allies, Italy became nothing more than a source of men and materials for the Germans, to be plundered at will"



Right: 'Here are the liberators', a propaganda poster demonising the US for its part in bombing campaigns

The slaughter at Grotto Via Ardeatina was carried out by an SS unit as revenge for partisan activity

The Allies creep closer

Many Italians had hoped that the armistice with the Allies would mean an end to their war. This was perhaps naïve, but few would have guessed that their struggle was just beginning.

Germany could not allow the Allies to simply occupy a section of Italy and use it as a launch pad for strikes against the Fatherland. The removal of the Italians as a fighting partner, however their abilities were viewed, was nevertheless a major blow and Germany would soon be fighting on three desperately hard fronts as the long-anticipated invasion of Europe neared.

The first Italians to wake up to the reality of the new situation were the soldiers themselves. More than 600,000 became prisoners of war, with the bulk of them shipped to Germany to work as forced labour, while around 200,000 took the alternative of joining the German Army.

Atrocities were common, most notably on the island of Cephalonia, where Italian troops made the mistake of resisting the Germans. More than a thousand were killed in the one-sided fighting that followed, and 5,000 survivors were then systematically massacred. The Allied offensive from Salerno made slow progress, but had driven the Germans back to a major defensive line by January 1944. Three assaults were launched on the town of Cassino, one of the keystones of the Gustav Line, but the German defences could not be breached. The war had entered a brutal, attritional phase and the Italians found themselves bystanders caught between two destructive forces. For some, simply

"Partisan groups had sprung up spontaneously on the declaration of the armistice with the Allies, with an estimated 10,000 civilians arming themselves and forming loosely organised groups"

Mussolini's popularity declined rapidly as the Allies advanced up the Italian mainland

A young soldier is comforted during an inspection of a paramilitary Black Brigade

Mussolini spent the last two years of his life as a puppet figurehead of the Italian Social Republic

Theatre of nightmares

Italy was the setting for some of the most bitter fighting of the entire war, as well as the political intrigues behind the fall of Mussolini

AOSTA
COMO
MILAN
VERONA
VENICE
FLORENCE
RIMINI
LEGHORN
PESCARA
ROME
L'AQUILA
ANZIO
CASSINO
FOGGIA
SALERNO
TARANTO
PALERMO

01 Mussolini deposed

The path to Italy's eventual surrender to the Allies lies open following the ousting of Benito Mussolini. Taken into captivity at the Hotel Campo Imperatore, he is forgotten in the scramble to leave Rome in the face of the German advance upon the city and is rescued by German paratroopers.

02 The Allies invade

Just hours after the surrender of Italian forces to the Allies, landings begin at Salerno on 9th September 1943. The strength of German resistance surprises the Allies, who make slow progress and are then stalled by defensive works along the Gustav Line. A typically harsh Italian winter does not help.

03 RSI set up

Mussolini's only function from September 1943 is as the head of a puppet regime in northern Italy, effectively supported, organised and run by the Germans. Based at Salò, Mussolini has no power and virtually no influence left.

04 Anti-partisan operations

March 1944 sees an increase in the number and scale of operations against Italian partisans. Forces comprised of both German and Italian fascist units strike in a series of raids (known as 'rastrellamentos') in northern Italy, with partisan casualties often reaching the hundreds.

05 Breakthrough at Cassino

After three previous assaults on the area around Cassino fail, the Allies finally break through the Gustav Line, with II Polish Corps to the fore, in May 1944. Tantalisingly, it looks as if the entire German 10th Army (AOK 10) might be trapped, but the opportunity is lost.

06 The liberation of Rome

On 4th June 1944, just two days before the Normandy Landings on D-Day, the American Fifth Army liberates Rome. Controversy still remains over the American commander's determination to reach Rome first, which may have cost the Allies the chance of bottling up AOK 10.

07 Mussolini's capture

On 27th April 1945, while attempting to flee Italy as German forces crumble under the Allied onslaught, Mussolini is captured by the 52nd Garibaldi Brigade, near the village of Dongo and the Swiss border. A day later, he is executed.

> "THE PATH TO ITALY'S EVENTUAL SURRENDER TO THE ALLIES LIES OPEN FOLLOWING THE OUSTING OF BENITO MUSSOLINI"

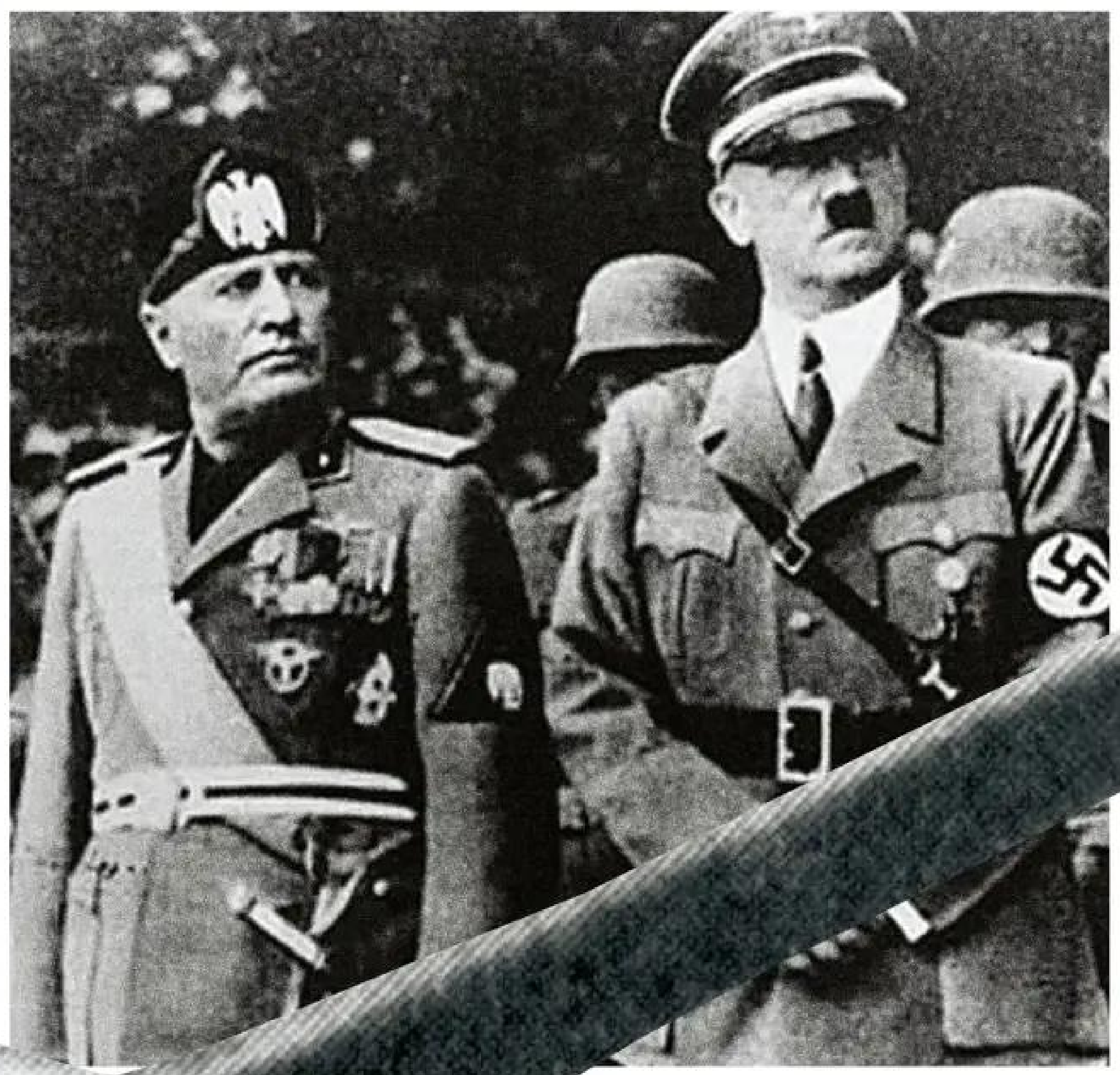
> "The situation was seldom clear-cut, with many young men choosing to join an organised unit not through any political or ideological conviction, but simply out of desperation and the need for some form of employment"

standing by and watching was unthinkable, but the understandable desire to do something to respond to the situation would lead Italy into the murky depths of a civil war.

Resistance erupts

Partisan groups had sprung up spontaneously on the declaration of the armistice with the Allies, with an estimated 10,000 civilians arming themselves and forming loosely organised groups. A two-day resistance was also staged at Rome until the Germans threatened to raze the city. Around 50,000 prisoners of war, mostly from Yugoslavia, were also thrown into the mix when the Italians guarding them simply left their posts. Many headed for the hills and the mountains to join partisan groups.

Such groups were small in number at the start of the war, possibly comprising as few as a dozen men. After the armistice was signed in September 1943, the number of active partisans in Italy would rise sharply. Following Mussolini's removal, previously banned political parties stepped out of the shadows to form partisan groups with fervent



Above: Hitler and Mussolini's relationship deteriorated as the war continued

Left: Mussolini giving his last speech in Milan, 1944, promising that German arms will turn the tide and condemning Bolshevism

ideological grounding. Almost half of these groups were communists, known as 'Garibaldi Brigades'. The Action Party was the next largest faction, but there were also partisans fighting for the aims of the Socialists, Christian Democrats, Labour Democrats and Liberals, as well as some who spurned any sort of political affiliation at all, such as the Stella Rossa, the 'Red Star Brigade'.

The six major anti-fascist parties organised themselves into the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, or Committee of National Liberation (CLN), aiming to co-ordinate resistance to the German occupation and Italian fascist groups. Many of these had sprung up at the same time as Mussolini's new government. Fascist militia, in the form of the Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana (GNR), worked to counter the partisans, aided by the Gestapo, the SS security service, the military-based carabinieri police and barely controllable gangs.

The situation was seldom clear-cut, with many young men choosing to join an organised unit not through any political or ideological conviction, but simply out of desperation and the need for some form of employment. Nevertheless, there were enough fanatics to ensure that fighting between the various factions was often savage.

Historians have long debated the effectiveness of the partisans, but there can be no doubt that they increased the scale of their activities as the Allied Italian campaign progressed. From less than 500 reported attacks in January 1944, there were more than 2,000 in March and more than 3,000 in June. The attacks, especially when they targeted German soldiers, drew severe retribution. As a rule of thumb the Germans would execute ten prisoners or civilians for every German soldier killed by partisans. Perhaps the most notorious reprisal followed a bombing in Rome, mounted by the communist Gruppi di Azione Patriottica Centrale (GAP Central). An 18 kilogram bomb was detonated as a company of SS soldiers marched by on 23rd March 1944, instantly killing 28 of them. A further five soldiers would succumb to their wounds the following day. Furious, the Germans responded by rounding up Jews, communists, criminals and others that happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The following day, in batches of five at a time, they were executed at the Ardeatine Caves, south of Rome. Brutal enough to start with, the executions became more cruel as the day progressed and some of the victims were actually beaten to death.

Inevitably, many groups turned their attentions away from the Germans and onto infrastructure – such as bridges and railway lines – or their fascist opponents, which did not draw such a strong response. The civilian population, warned by the Germans not to get involved and encouraged by the Allies to do just that, entered a terrifyingly uncertain phase, where retribution for an act of resistance could be delivered at any moment. Severe supply shortages, caused by the campaign raging within the country, also led to an explosion of black market activity. In many places the situation approached anarchy as armed gangs simply robbed people and houses in order to sell the proceeds. The Allied forces, slowly inching their way up the country, also failed to deliver the level of provisions they had previously promised. Even worse though, soldiers

> "Mussolini despaired at the brutal nature of the German occupation, but his new government was toothless"

Italy's Partisans

Organised resistance to the Germans and Italian fascists came in many forms

Garibaldi brigades

With communist backgrounds, the Garibaldi brigades were the largest faction in the partisan landscape. Usually commanded by veterans of the Spanish Civil War, a brigade was nominally 100-300 strong, but numbers could be far higher and fluctuated wildly. Brigades actually lost effectiveness when numbers swelled, making them a bigger, slower target for anti-partisan forces.

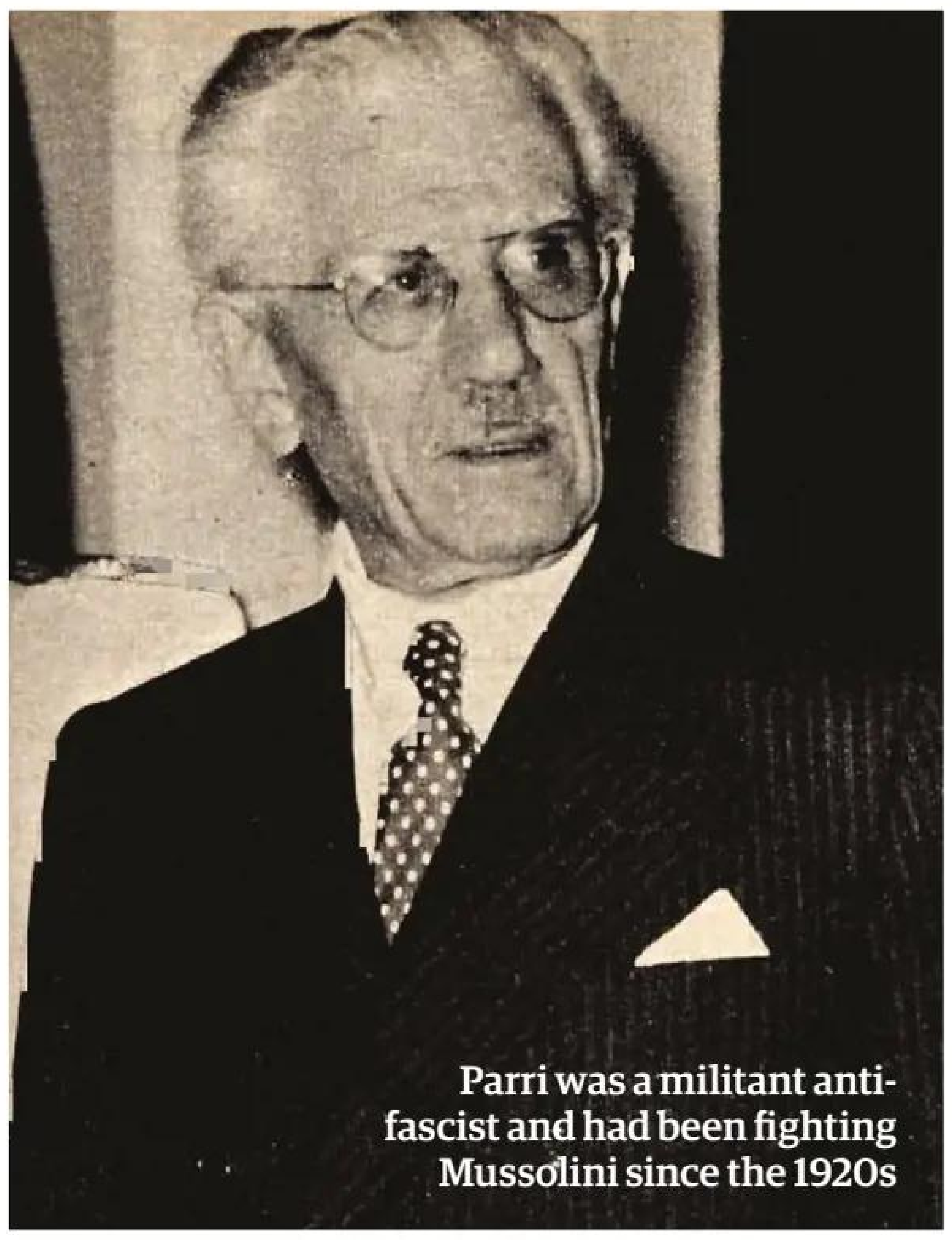
Stella Rossa (Red Star Brigade)

One of the few partisan organisations to be free from political ideology, the Stella Rossa resisted outside influences and existed thanks to support and arms drops by the American-run Office of Strategic Services – the forerunner of the CIA. The Stella Rossa first became active, with just 20 members, in November 1943.

Partisans photographed on the road to Belgrade

Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Liberty) brigades

Backed by the Action Party, GL brigades had the lofty ambition of forming a sort of unified army rather than merely engaging in guerrilla warfare. They made up around 21 per cent of all partisan forces in Italy and received preferential treatment from the Allies, who mistrusted the communists. One of their leaders, Ferruccio Parri (pictured), would go on to become a Prime Minister of Italy.



Parri was a militant anti-fascist and had been fighting Mussolini since the 1920s were known to indulge in the plunder and rape of the civilian population as they passed through.

The hamstrung leader

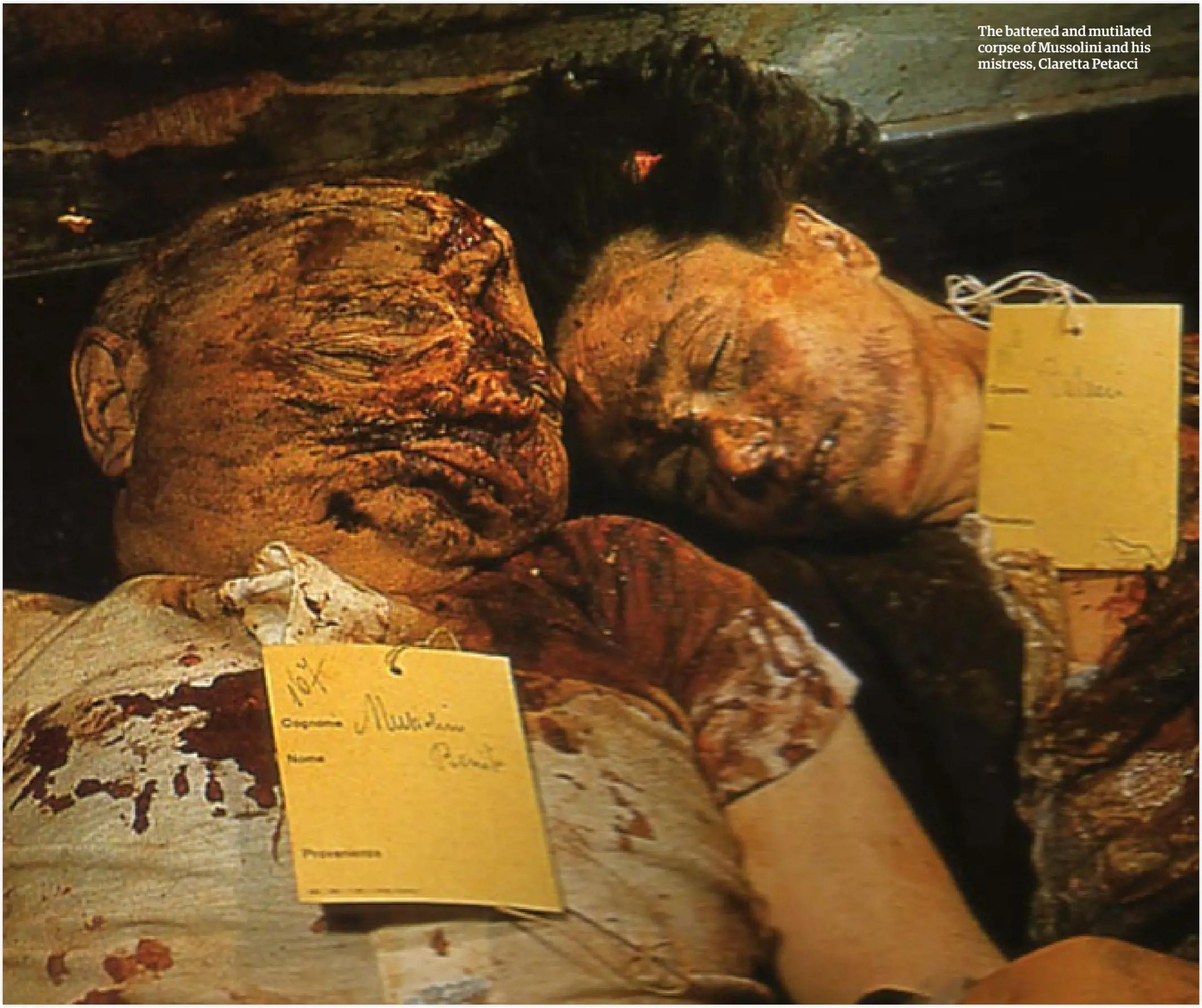
Mussolini despaired at the brutal nature of the German occupation, but his new government was toothless. Based, humiliatingly, at Salò rather than Rome, the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI) saw its various offices scattered over a wide area in a deliberate attempt to limit its ability to function efficiently. Heaping further humiliation on Il Duce, he was granted a new army of just four divisions, and the bulk of them would need to come from new recruits. Only 12,000 officers and NCOs were allowed to return from Germany and conscription was required to fill out the new army's pitifully meagre ranks. This led to a surge in partisan numbers, as many young men preferred to take their chances in the mountains rather than obey their call-up orders. Mussolini was not, however, a totally spent force. Falling back on his early career as a journalist, he became a prolific writer once more, churning out propaganda pieces that referred to the Allies as 'Anglo-American invaders' and contrasted their habit of flattening Italian cities and towns with the way the Germans had left Rome intact after being driven out by the American Fifth Army in June 1944. The Allied campaign had progressed remorselessly – following success in the fourth Battle of Cassino, in May 1944 – but there had been huge casualties on both sides as the Germans repeatedly fell back on new defensive lines. The diversion of German units from France to help the Normandy invasion, launched on 6th June (just after the fall of Rome), was the stated aim of the Italian campaign, but as many historians would later note, it was debatable who was actually tying down whom.

A desperate escape

By the end of 1944, Mussolini was little more than a recluse, but he still had a little fight left in him. He formulated a plan to launch a counteroffensive using his precious four divisions, that failed to make any lasting gains against the allied advance.

In a last display of his old passion, Mussolini gave a speech in Milan in December, drawing rapturous applause from a packed crowd at the Teatro Lirico.

It was little more than a last hurrah. His German doctor declared, in February 1945, that he was the 'victim of a serious physical and moral collapse'. Also crumpling was the German military position, on every front. The Allies broke through the Gothic Line in April, at the same time as they approached



The battered and mutilated corpse of Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci

Berlin from the West and the Russians approached it from the East.

On 25th April, the partisan leadership met with Mussolini in Milan to work out terms for the surrender of his fascist militia groups. His attempt to work out a deal with them failed.

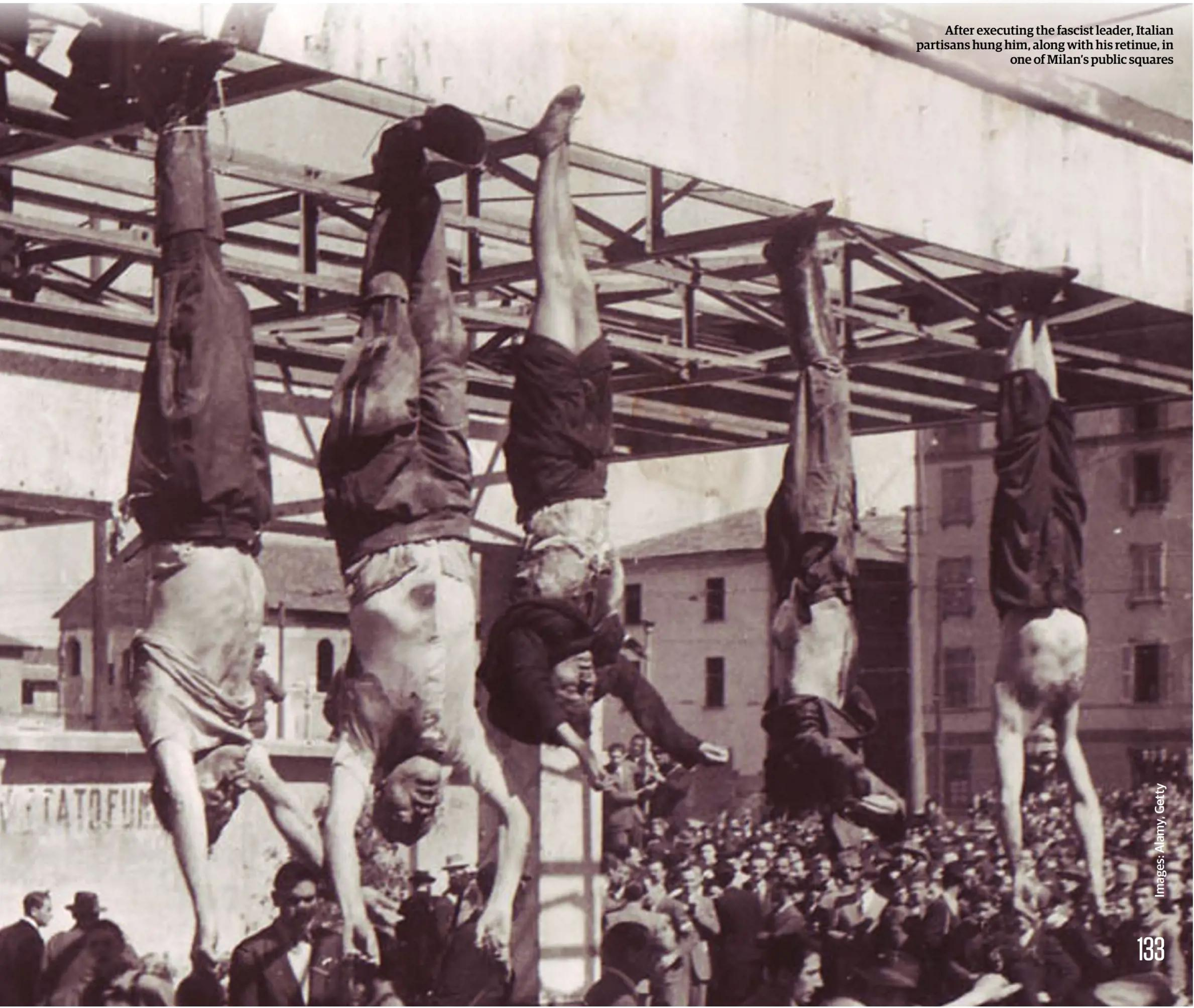
Leaving Milan, at 8pm, Mussolini embarked on a desperate bid to escape the country. He made it to Como that night and by 27th April had fallen in with a column of German troops, wearily heading home after their exhausting campaign in Italy.

A partisan roadblock stopped the column and after protracted discussions, the Germans were told they could continue their journey – but that all Italians had to be left behind. The Germans were unconcerned about the fate of their Italian passengers, but did agree to allow Mussolini, and Mussolini alone, to travel with them in disguise. They gave him a greatcoat, helmet, sub-machine gun and the fateful sunglasses, in a futile attempt to obscure the most familiar face in Italy. Recognised quickly when the column was searched, Mussolini was arrested. He had fallen into the hands of the communists in the form of the 52nd Garibaldi Brigade patrol.

The final act

The communists were determined not to hand Mussolini, or the other members of his retinue – including his mistress, Claretta Petacci – over to the Allies. A miserable few hours followed, in which Mussolini's fate was argued over and he was disguised once more, this time by the partisans as they attempted to keep him alive until they had decided what to do with him. The decision, when it came, was brutally simple. Alongside his mistress, Mussolini was riddled with sub-machine gun bullets on 28th April 1945. Although many initially claimed to have been the man to kill Il Duce, confusion still reigns over who pulled the trigger.

The remaining members of his retinue were also executed and the bodies, including those of Mussolini and his mistress, were unceremoniously dumped in the Piazzale Loreto in Milan. On the morning of 29th April, the bodies were discovered and a mob quickly gathered to spit, kick and otherwise abuse the corpses. Mussolini, his mistress and others were strung up by their feet, their already stiffened bodies hanging grotesquely. The following day, Hitler committed suicide. Even then, however, Italy's misery was not over. Mussolini was gone but the partisans had plenty of other targets. An orgy of violence erupted as thousands of fascists, and suspected fascists, were summarily executed.



After executing the fascist leader, Italian partisans hung him, along with his retinue, in one of Milan's public squares

Images: Alamy, Getty

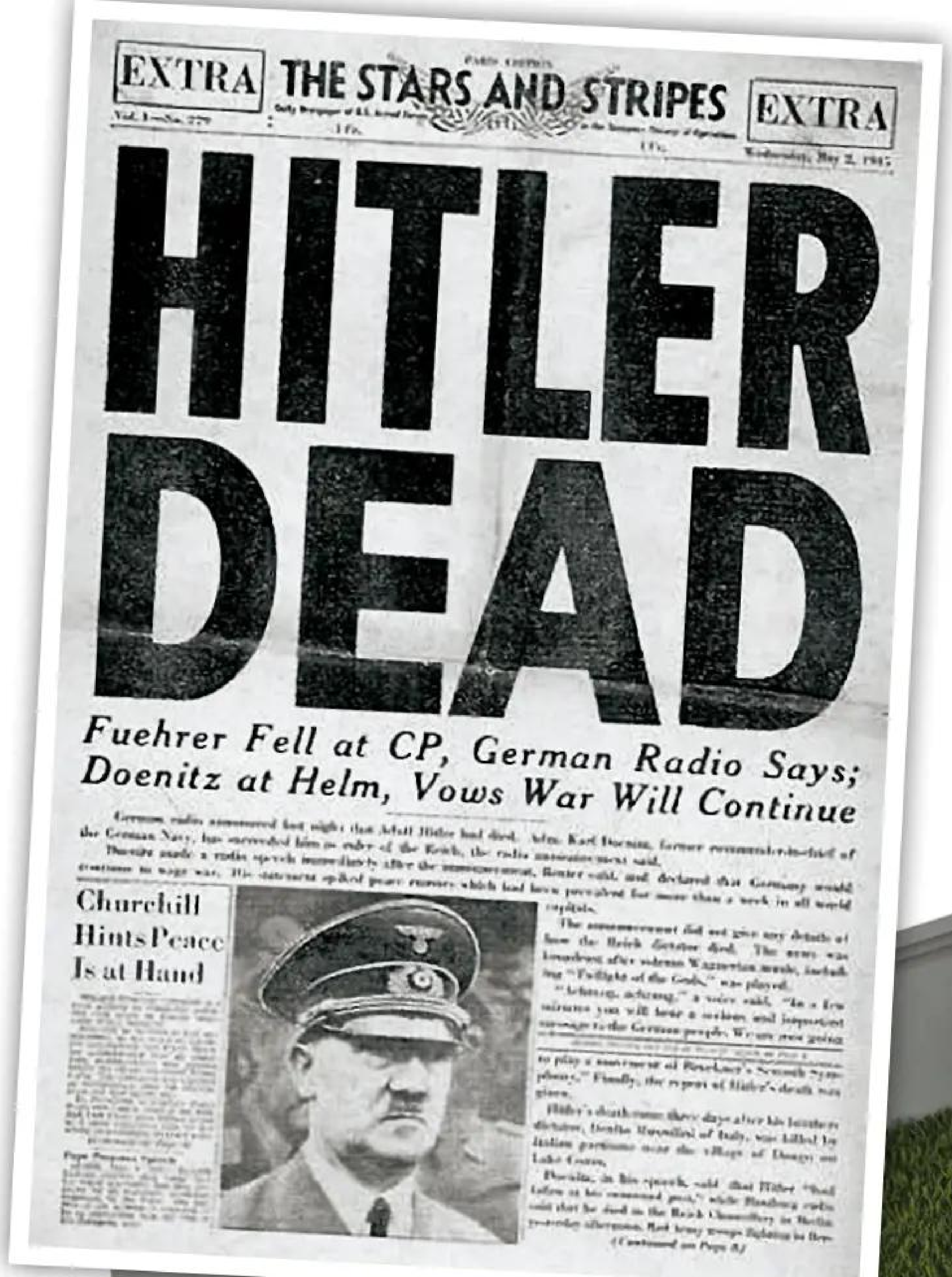
ADOLF HITLER'S SUICIDE

BERLIN, GERMANY
30TH APRIL 1945

As battle raged on the streets of Berlin, Nazi Germany's Führer was 15 metres underground in his subterranean lair, the Führerbunker. Adolf Hitler was safe for now, but it wouldn't be long until the Third Reich's capital was overrun by the vengeful Red Army. Hitler's remaining allies had pleaded with him to escape south to the Alpine retreat of Berchtesgaden. However, the Führer, determined to be a martyr for the cause, stayed put. Now more mentally twisted than ever, he believed his presence in Berlin would inspire what was left of the Wehrmacht to hold out. There would be no humiliating armistice like in 1918.

Hitler's last few days were dominated by those he held in high regard deserting him. Heinrich Himmler attempted to make peace with the Allies while Hermann Göring appointed himself the new führer. It was only at the end of April that Hitler realised the game was up and made preparations for his passing. Under no circumstances would he be captured and suffer the same as Mussolini, strung up for the world to see. He married his long-time companion Eva Braun and dictated his final testament that, typically, was a tirade on how Jews were to blame for the war.

At 2.30am on 30th April, Hitler bid farewell to those in the Führerbunker. That afternoon, he was found dead. A Walther PPK pistol was on the floor next to him and his new wife also lay lifeless after biting on a cyanide capsule. The bodies were burned until they were just charred remains. The Wehrmacht's guns soon fell silent and the tyranny of the Third Reich was over.

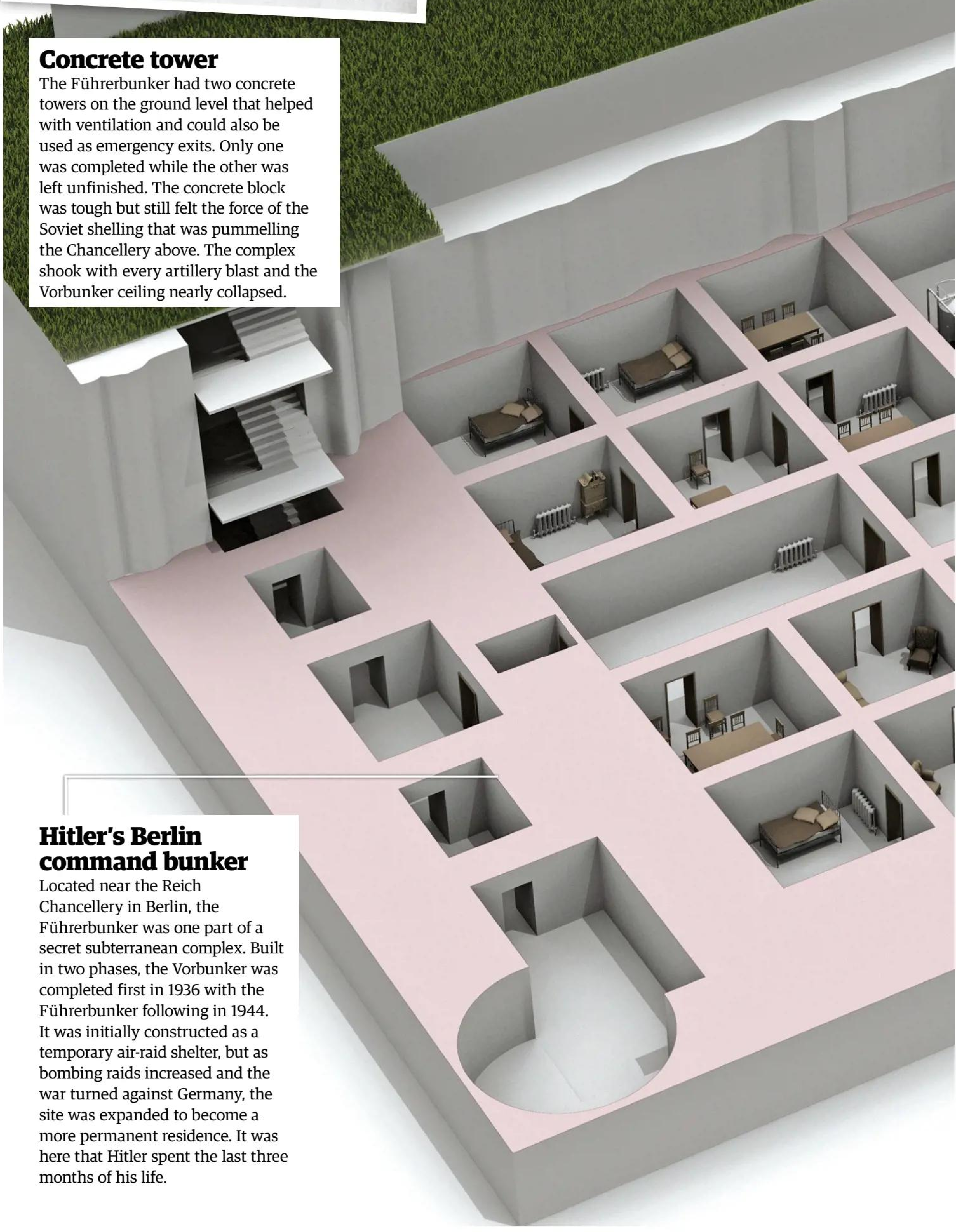


EXTRA THE STARS AND STRIPES EXTRA

HITLER DEAD

Fuehrer Fell at CP, German Radio Says; Doenitz at Helm, Vows War Will Continue

Churchill Hints Peace Is at Hand



New Chancellery Garden

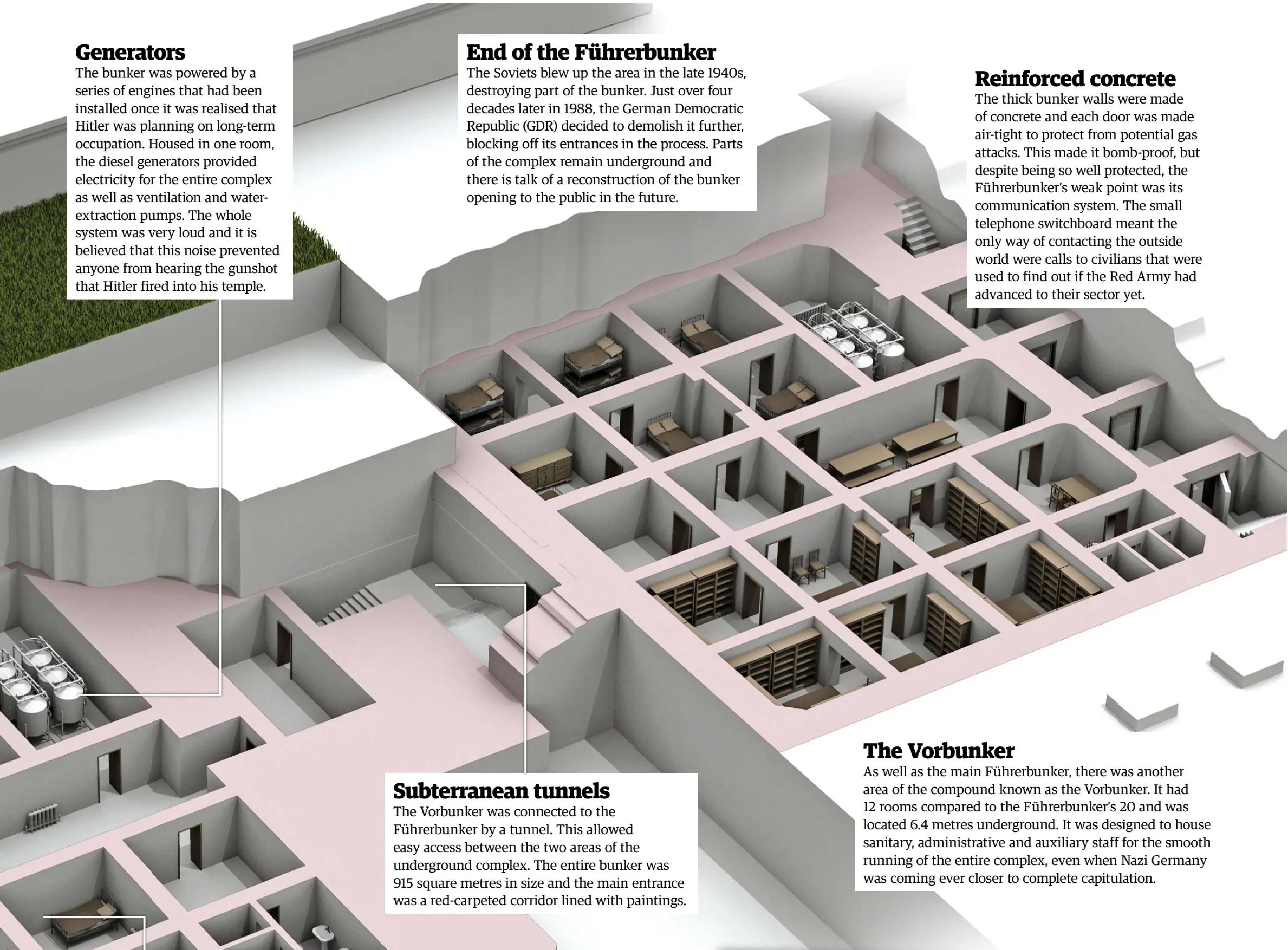
Hitler's body was burned to a crisp in the grounds above the bunker. Whether the corpses recovered by the Red Army were those of Hitler and Eva Braun is still hotly debated. Joseph Goebbels, who stayed with Hitler until the bitter end, ordered his body to be burned after he had already killed his six children with cyanide. Goebbels's body was later discovered by Red Army soldiers.

Concrete tower

The Führerbunker had two concrete towers on the ground level that helped with ventilation and could also be used as emergency exits. Only one was completed while the other was left unfinished. The concrete block was tough but still felt the force of the Soviet shelling that was pummelling the Chancellery above. The complex shook with every artillery blast and the Vorbunker ceiling nearly collapsed.

Hitler's Berlin command bunker

Located near the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, the Führerbunker was one part of a secret subterranean complex. Built in two phases, the Vorbunker was completed first in 1936 with the Führerbunker following in 1944. It was initially constructed as a temporary air-raid shelter, but as bombing raids increased and the war turned against Germany, the site was expanded to become a more permanent residence. It was here that Hitler spent the last three months of his life.



Generators

The bunker was powered by a series of engines that had been installed once it was realised that Hitler was planning on long-term occupation. Housed in one room, the diesel generators provided electricity for the entire complex as well as ventilation and water-extraction pumps. The whole system was very loud and it is believed that this noise prevented anyone from hearing the gunshot that Hitler fired into his temple.

End of the Führerbunker

The Soviets blew up the area in the late 1940s, destroying part of the bunker. Just over four decades later in 1988, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) decided to demolish it further, blocking off its entrances in the process. Parts of the complex remain underground and there is talk of a reconstruction of the bunker opening to the public in the future.

Reinforced concrete

The thick bunker walls were made of concrete and each door was made air-tight to protect from potential gas attacks. This made it bomb-proof, but despite being so well protected, the Führerbunker's weak point was its communication system. The small telephone switchboard meant the only way of contacting the outside world were calls to civilians that were used to find out if the Red Army had advanced to their sector yet.

Subterranean tunnels

The Vorbunker was connected to the Führerbunker by a tunnel. This allowed easy access between the two areas of the underground complex. The entire bunker was 915 square metres in size and the main entrance was a red-carpeted corridor lined with paintings.

The Vorbunker

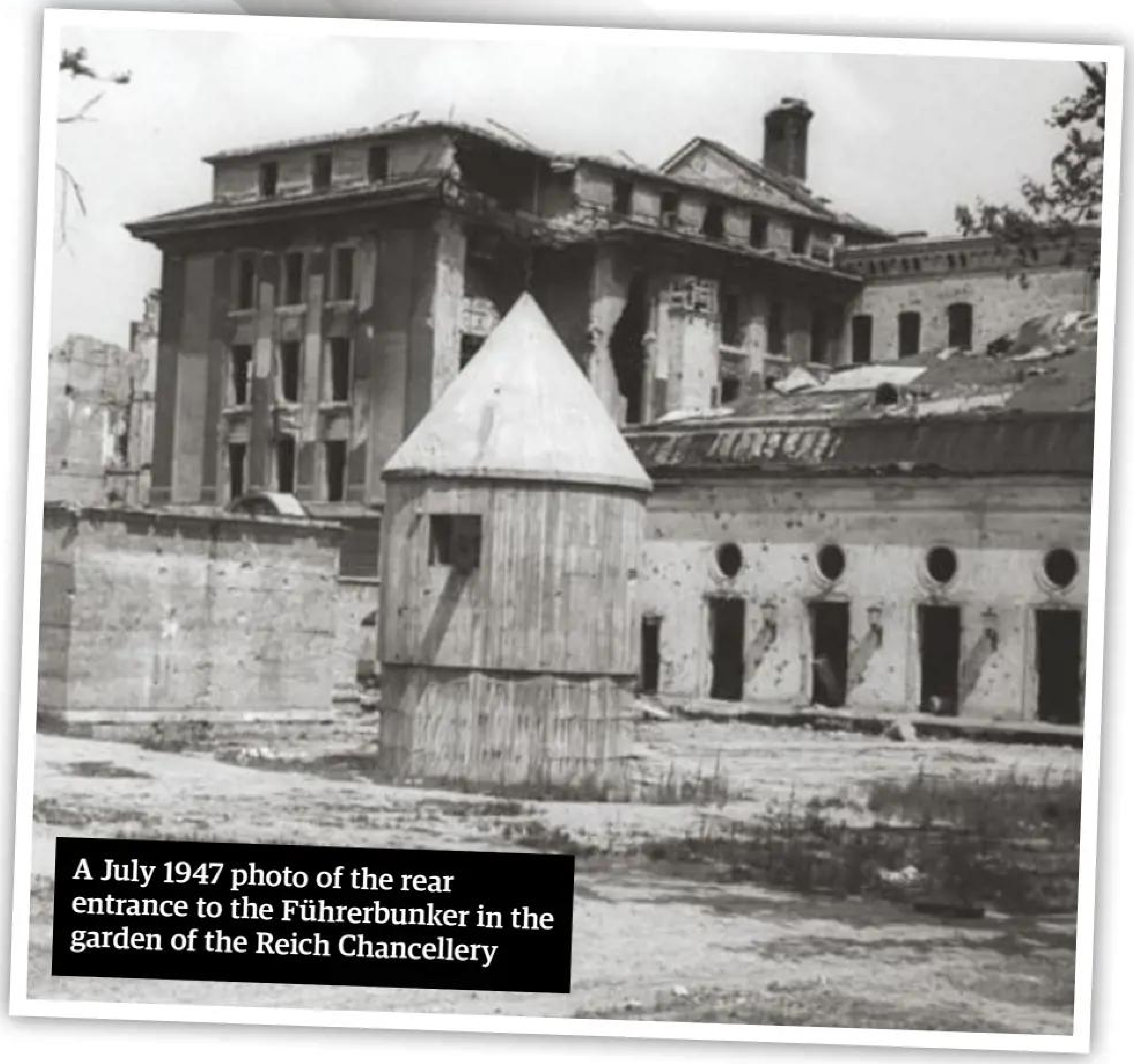
As well as the main Führerbunker, there was another area of the compound known as the Vorbunker. It had 12 rooms compared to the Führerbunker's 20 and was located 6.4 metres underground. It was designed to house sanitary, administrative and auxiliary staff for the smooth running of the entire complex, even when Nazi Germany was coming ever closer to complete capitulation.

A variety of rooms

Hitler stayed in the bunker for 105 days from January 1945 until his suicide in April. The area was kitted out with a number of quarters to make the stay as bearable and functional as possible. The Führer had an office and a map room to plan military strategy in, as well as a bedroom and a bathroom and even a room specifically reserved for his dogs and bodyguards.

A little bit of luxury

The entire underground building was originally designed as a simple air-raid shelter but it became something much grander. The luxury of the Führerbunker may have been above a standard air-raid bunker but it was a world away from the Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair) where Hitler orchestrated his strategies during the war. The conference room in particular was cramped, but this was where the final military briefings of the German war effort were held.



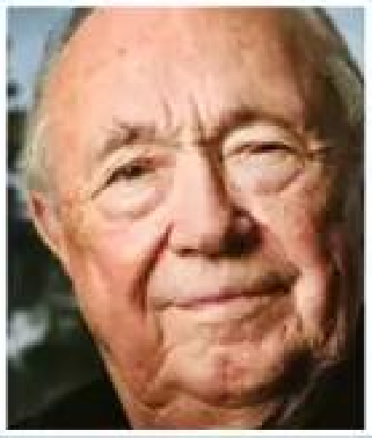
A July 1947 photo of the rear entrance to the Führerbunker in the garden of the Reich Chancellery

© Sol90

Eye Witness

THE FIRST ATOMIC BOMB HIROSHIMA, JAPAN, 6TH AUGUST 1945

DUTCH VAN KIRK



Having already served 58 missions in Africa and Europe during World War II, Dutch Van Kirk transferred to the 509th Composite Group. He was the navigator on the Enola Gay, which on 6th August 1945 dropped the first nuclear bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The last surviving crew member of the Enola Gay, he died on 28th July 2014.

> “I didn’t feel too good about dropping the bomb – but I didn’t feel too bad about dropping it either. It could have been us… ”

Theodore Van Kirk, known to everyone as ‘Dutch’, was having trouble sleeping.

It was a common affliction among soldiers before a mission, but then again Dutch and his fellow 11 crewmates stationed on the tiny Pacific island of Tinian had more reason than most to be suffering from insomnia that night. The date was 5th August 1945 and tomorrow morning they were to drop the first-ever atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

To pass the time, some of the crew – including navigator Dutch, bombardier, Tom Ferebee, and pilot, Paul Tibbets, played poker. It was quite prophetic considering that in a matter of hours they would be gambling again – but this time with much higher stakes.

Sure, the USA had successfully detonated the first nuclear device the previous month during the Trinity test in New Mexico, and Dutch, like all the crew, had several months’ intensive training at Wendover Airbase in Utah under his belt. Nevertheless the fact remained that what they were about to do had never before been attempted in warfare. Indeed, Dutch recalls, “One of the atomic scientists told us we think you’ll be okay if the plane is [14.5 kilometres] nine miles away when the bomb detonates.” When challenged on his use of the word *think*, he levelled with them: “We just don’t know.”

Dutch had been hand-picked to join the 509th Composite Group – the unit tasked with deploying nuclear weapons – by his former commander: “I flew with Paul Tibbets all the time in England. We flew General Dwight Eisenhower [later to become US president] from Hurn [on the south coast of Britain] down to Gibraltar, for example, to command the north African invasion. Then we were all separated and doing various things – I was at a navigation school, for example, teaching other navigators. Tibbets was picked to take command of the 509th group and that’s when he looked up some of the people he’d worked with in the 97th [Bombardment Group].”

The history books often paint a picture that the US government and other Allied powers were hand-wringing right up until the final hour over the decision to use the A-bomb. However, although Japan was presented with an ultimatum to surrender on 26th July – which they rejected two days later – Dutch personally felt it was always a foregone conclusion: “I knew that I was going to drop the atomic bomb from February of that year [1945]. It didn’t come as a surprise. We were posted to the US airbase at Tinian for about a month prior to dropping the bomb, just keeping in shape.”

Around 10pm, the crew were called from the barracks to have an early breakfast before one last briefing and final checks of the Enola Gay. Dutch remembers they had pineapple fritters because he hated them, but Paul Tibbets loved them. While he might not have seen eye to eye with his commander when it came to breakfast, he has only praise for the man that piloted the specially modified B-29 to Hiroshima – and back again.

“He was an outstanding pilot. His skill saved all of the crew’s lives a number of times in Europe and Africa. When he got in an aeroplane, he [became] part of it.

Countdown to destruction

16th July 1945

5.29am **First detonation** US scientists successfully detonate the first nuclear device at the Trinity test site.

28th July

Japanese government rejects surrender terms put forward in the Potsdam Declaration.

5th August

2pm **Calm before storm** Having been told they have the go-ahead to drop the atomic bomb, Van Kirk and the rest of the crew try to get some sleep.

3pm **The Little Boy bomb is loaded onto the Enola Gay.**

6pm **Struggling to sleep, Van Kirk, Ferebee, Tibbets and others play poker.**

10pm **The crew gets up to prepare for the flight to Hiroshima and eat breakfast.**

6th August

12am **Van Kirk and the crew make their way to the Enola Gay, after a final briefing.**

1.37am **Weather report** Three weather planes leave North Field Airbase on Tinian to confirm conditions are favourable.

2.45am **The Enola Gay takes off, followed by three other B-29s taking part in Special Mission #13.**

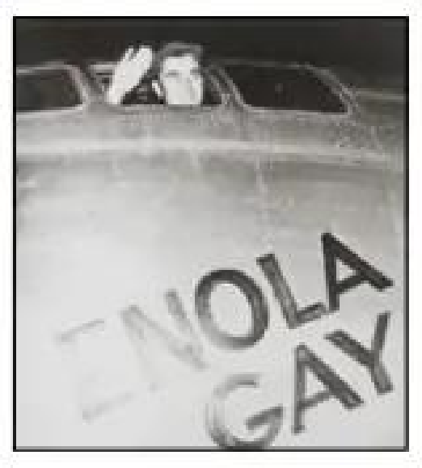
5.52am **Little Boy armed** The planes fly over Iwo Jima island, where the Enola Gay's backup, Top Secret, lands. The Little Boy bomb is armed.

7.30am **With the all-clear from the weather planes, the Enola Gay, The Great Artiste and #91 head for Hiroshima.**

8.13am **Pilot, Paul Tibbets, hands over control to the bombardier, Tom Ferebee, to make the bomb run.**

8.15am **Payload dropped** Little Boy is released and it detonates 43 seconds after, about 600m (1,900ft) above the city of Hiroshima. The Enola Gay experiences a shockwave moments later.

3pm **Mission complete** The Enola Gay touches down on Tinian, its mission successfully completed. Paul Tibbets receives the Distinguished Service Cross.



ENOLA GAY
82

Seven of the Enola Gay's 12-man bombing crew stand before the aircraft; Dutch is third from the left, looking down, next to pilot, Paul Tibbets

The North Field Airbase on Tinian played host to 15 modified B-29s and their crews

When you flew with Paul Tibbets you didn't have to have your shoes polished or your pants pressed – and all that sort of stuff – but when you got in the plane, you better damn well know what you were doing!"

It's hard to imagine what the mood on the Enola Gay must have been like as it took off at 2.45am, but from Dutch's perspective this mission was the same as any other. "We were going a long distance over water, using Iwo Jima as a checkpoint on the way. Now if you got lost between Iwo Jima and Japan, you really were a sorry navigator! Everybody on board was doing his own thing. Ferebee took a nap, for example, [while] our radio operator, as I recall, was reading a whodunnit about some boxer. Everybody was making sure they did what they were there to do, and that they did it right."

While the Enola Gay and Bockscar (the plane that dropped the Nagasaki A-bomb) are the two that have gone down in history, Dutch is keen to point out that the operation was a lot wider than that: indeed, seven aircraft were involved in Special Bombing Mission #13 to Hiroshima on 6th August. Three were observational planes that flew ahead to ensure conditions were right, Top Secret was a backup to the Enola Gay which landed on Iwo Jima, while the other two aircraft – The Great Artiste and Plane #91 (later named Necessary Evil) – accompanied the Enola Gay for the full operation.

"The Great Artiste had instruments that were to be dropped at the same time as we dropped the bomb. If you were to ask me the name of them, I couldn't tell you; I just always called them 'blast meters' because that's what they were measuring. The other aircraft [Plane #91] was flying about [32 kilometres] 20 miles behind with a large camera to get pictures of the explosion. Unfortunately on the day the camera didn't work. So the best pictures we got were from the handheld camera of the navigator on that plane."

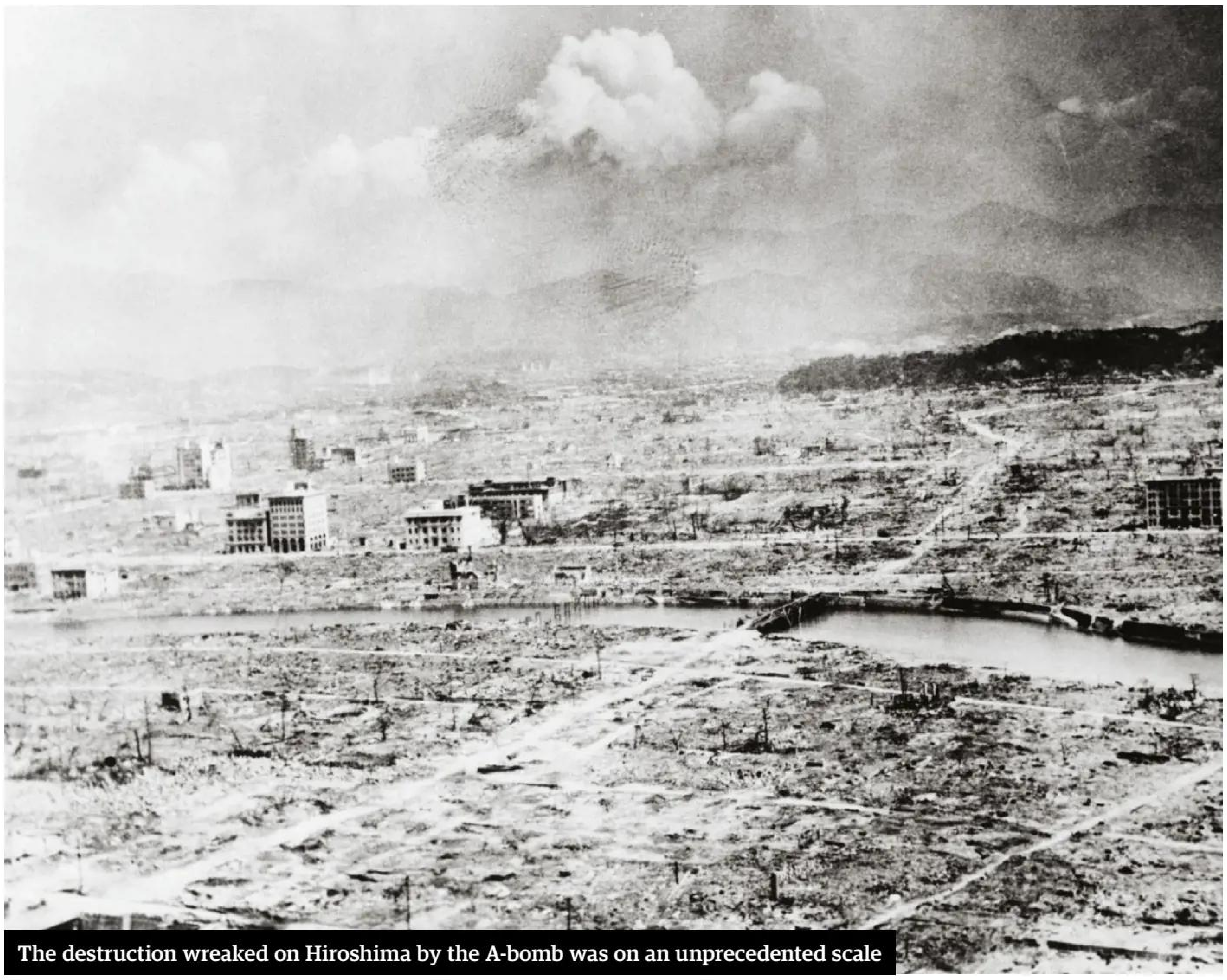
The three aircraft arrived at Hiroshima without incident around 8am. The city had been chalked as the primary target for several reasons. There were a great number of military facilities and troops there, as well as a busy port with factories supplying a lot of the materials that would be used to defend Japan in the event of an invasion. Beyond these factors, Hiroshima had never been previously targeted by Allied forces, so any damage recorded later could solely be attributed to the nuclear bomb. Tragically for the citizens of Hiroshima, it also meant the Japanese authorities had very little reason to suspect an attack there – even when the tiny squadron of three B-29s was no doubt spotted approaching…

On the actual bomb run, Tibbets relinquished control of the Enola Gay to bombardier and close friend of Dutch's, Major Tom Ferebee. As the Little Boy bomb (which actually was not so little, weighing in at 4,400 kilograms/9,700 pounds) was released, the plane experienced an upward surge, but Tibbets managed to stabilise the B-29 and beat a hasty retreat.

"We made the 150-degree turn that we'd practised many times and pushed down the throttle to get away. All people were doing was holding on to something [in preparation for] the turbulence that was sure to follow. A loose person or a loose anything in the plane was going to go flying, so we all made sure we were in position and wearing our goggles." They were about 14.5 kilometres (nine miles) away when the bomb exploded, 43 seconds after it had been released. "We couldn't hear a thing over the engines, but we saw a bright flash and it was shortly after that we got the first shockwave.

"When we turned to take a look back, all we could see of Hiroshima was black smoke and dust. The mushroom cloud was well above us at about [12,190 metres] 40,000 feet and still rising. You could still see that cloud [480 kilometres] 300 miles away." What the crew of the Enola Gay couldn't have known at that point was just how destructive the atomic bomb had been. Underneath all that smoke and dust nearly 70 per cent of the city's buildings had been laid to waste and 80,000 people

> "When we turned to look back, all we could see of Hiroshima was black smoke and dust"



The destruction wreaked on Hiroshima by the A-bomb was on an unprecedented scale

were dead – and that figure was set to rise with the much-underestimated effects of radiation.

Unlike The Great Artiste with its faulty camera, as far as Dutch was concerned on board the Enola Gay "everything had gone exactly according to plan. The weather was perfect; I could probably see Hiroshima from [120 kilometres] 75 miles away. My navigation was only off by six seconds," he says with pride. "Tom put the bomb exactly where he expected. We got a lot of turbulence, but the plane did not break up, which it could have done, and we got home. Now, as for the second mission to Nagasaki, everything went wrong. They had a lot of luck on that mission…"

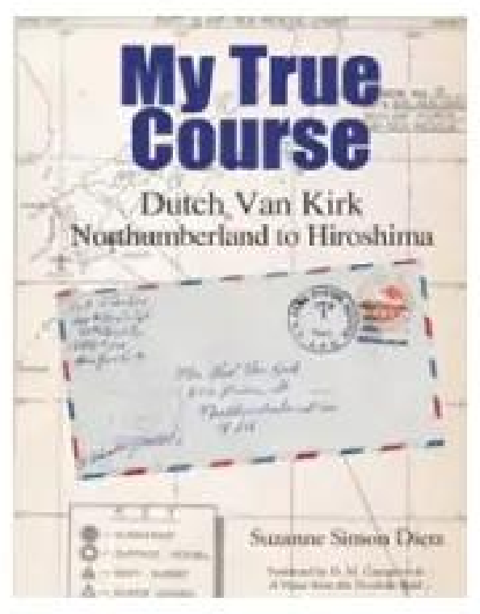
Indeed, three days later on 9th August, a different bombing crew on Bockscar almost didn't make it to Nagasaki due to a combination of bad weather and logistical errors. However, they managed to salvage the mission; the result of their success, or 'luck' as Dutch describes it, was the instant obliteration of another city and at least 40,000 of its inhabitants. Less than a week later Emperor Hirohito made a radio announcement to his subjects, declaring Japan's surrender due to "a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which is incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives."

A few weeks after the bombings, Dutch Van Kirk was part of the crew transporting scientists to Nagasaki to measure the devastation of one of these 'new and most cruel bombs' first-hand. "Having picked up some scientists in Tokyo from the Japanese atomic programme – they were also working on atomic bombs, you see – we flew down to Nagasaki; we couldn't land at Hiroshima at that time. We landed on a dirt field and the Japanese commander of the base came out, looking for someone to surrender to. We were given old cars – 1927 Chevrolet models, or similar – to drive to the city centre, but they all broke down three times before getting into Nagasaki.

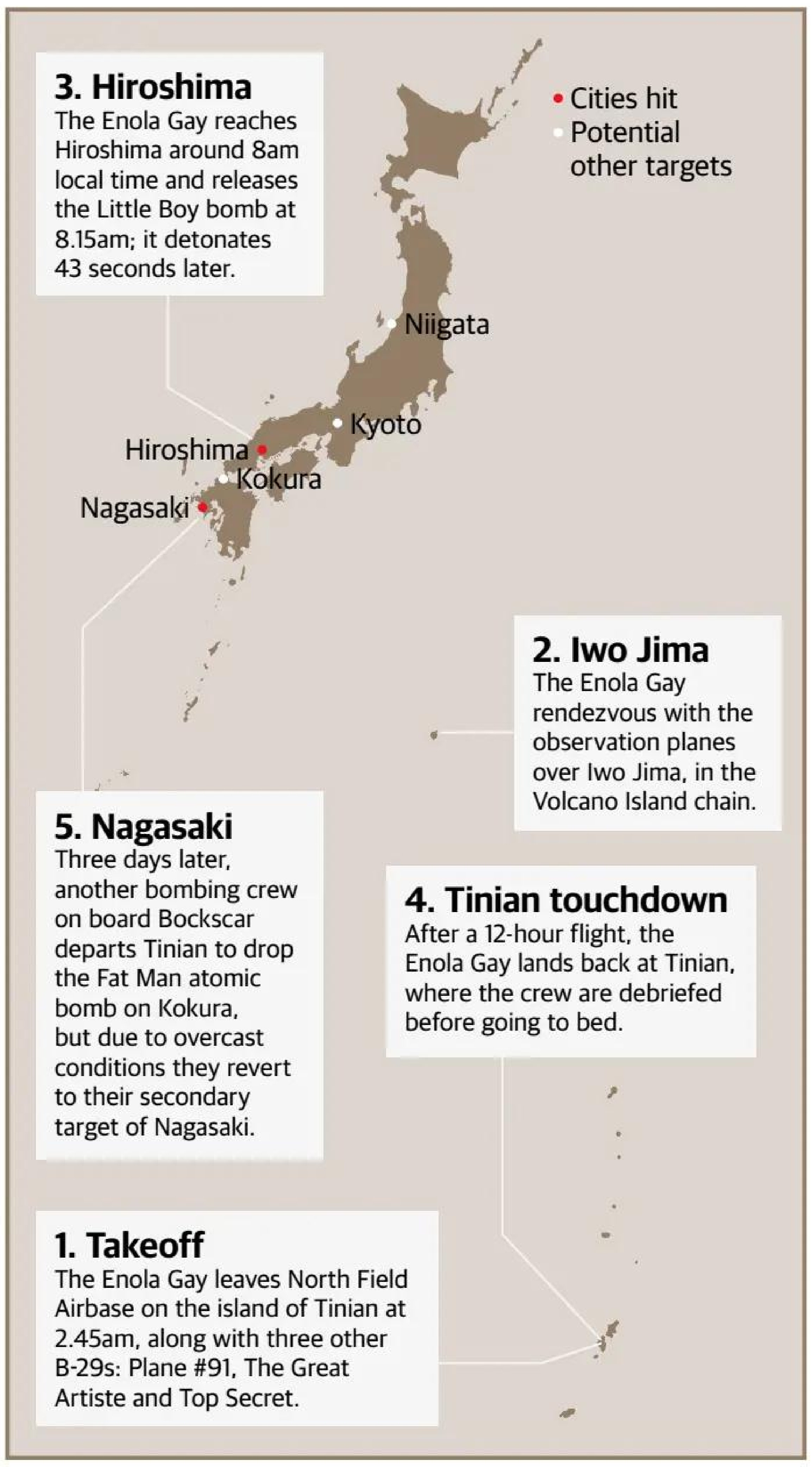
"There wasn't really anything that shocked us, though there is one thing [that has stayed with me]. The Japanese military was being broken up at the time and one of the soldiers arrived on the bus looking for his home – but it had been destroyed. I remember looking at Tom Ferebee, and saying, 'You know, Tom, that could have been us if the war had gone the opposite way.' I didn't feel too good about dropping the bomb – but I didn't feel too bad about dropping it either. This was one man among many that were saved by dropping the bomb" – because it had precluded a full-scale invasion of Japan. "It was very important we saw that, and we both recognised how lucky we were."

Along with all the other Enola Gay crew, who have since passed away, Dutch Van Kirk has no regrets about dropping the atomic bomb, seeing it as the lesser of two evils. Asked whether he believes the result would have been the same – ie World War II would have been forced to end – if things 'had gone the opposite way' and Japan had dropped an atomic bomb on America first, there's a long pause, before Dutch responds, "No, I don't think so. I think we would have been more resilient."

But underneath the assured bravado of his reply, there's no getting around how long he had hesitated before he answered – or the fact that, like that atomic scientist who couldn't offer any certainties on Tinian back in 1945, he had used the word 'think'.



If you'd like to read more about Dutch Van Kirk and his missions, *My True Course: Northumberland To Hiroshima* (by Suzanne Dietz) is available from www.amazon.com.



1. Takeoff
The Enola Gay leaves North Field Airbase on the island of Tinian at 2.45am, along with three other B-29s: Plane #91, The Great Artiste and Top Secret.

2. Iwo Jima
The Enola Gay rendezvous with the observation planes over Iwo Jima, in the Volcano Island chain.

3. Hiroshima
The Enola Gay reaches Hiroshima around 8am local time and releases the Little Boy bomb at 8.15am; it detonates 43 seconds later.

4. Tinian touchdown
After a 12-hour flight, the Enola Gay lands back at Tinian, where the crew are debriefed before going to bed.

5. Nagasaki
Three days later, another bombing crew on board Bockscar departs Tinian to drop the Fat Man atomic bomb on Kokura, but due to overcast conditions they revert to their secondary target of Nagasaki.

Origins and aftermath

The US started developing the nuclear bomb following a warning from Albert Einstein and other physicists in 1939 that the Germans were close to constructing their own. Project Manhattan got underway in 1941 and by July 1945 had successfully detonated the first-ever nuclear device in the Trinity test. By this point Germany had already surrendered so the Allied forces' sights were now trained solely on the last remaining Axis power: Japan. Having refused an ultimatum to surrender in the Potsdam Declaration, the Allies felt they were left with two options: a full-scale invasion or the use of nuclear bombs. They opted for the latter. It remains one of the most controversial military decisions ever taken, yet many argue that invading Japan would have claimed many more lives in the long term.

Little Boy produced a force equivalent to around 15,000 tons of TNT

© Corbis; Alamy

Liberating the Death Camps

As Allied soldiers advanced on Germany at the end of the Second World War, they encountered the truth about the Holocaust in all its horror...

When I walked through the gates I saw the walking dead... human beings that'd been beaten, starved, tortured, denied everything that makes life liveable. They were skin and bone with skeletal faces, and deep-set eyes. Their heads were clean shaven and many were holding onto each other just to stop from falling. Many of them had sores on their body from malnutrition. One man held out his hands and his fingers had webbed together from the scabs from these sores. When they stumbled towards me I backed away and I said to myself, "What is this insanity? Who are these people? And what had they done to cause other people to treat them like this?"' This is the testimony of Sergeant Leon Bass, an African-American soldier who was among the first to reach Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945. Bass' racially segregated unit was just one of many in the US, British, and Soviet armies to encounter such sights as World War II reached its catastrophic climax.

Russian troops were the first to stumble upon the Third Reich's darkest secret when they reached Majdanek in Poland, in July 1944. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans had attempted to demolish the camp and destroy all evidence of the killings. The large crematorium used to burn bodies of victims was itself set on fire. The gas chambers - used to carry out the mass killings - were left standing, however. Later that summer, the Red Army also overran the sites of death camps at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, although the Germans had dismantled these camps in 1943: with most of Poland's 3 million Jews already exterminated, they were no longer needed.

In January 1945, the Russians came across proof that the Nazis had been engaged in murder on an industrial scale when troops overran Auschwitz in southwest Poland. One of six Nazi extermination camps, it was the last one still operating in the final months of the war. It was also the largest mass-murder site in human history - responsible for the slaughter of over 1.1 million people.

The fleeing Germans had forced the majority of Auschwitz's surviving prisoners to march westward on what would become known as 'death marches'. But Soviet soldiers found more than 7,000 haunted, cadaverous prisoners still there clinging to life, who claimed to have witnessed unimaginable barbarism. Among the survivors were around 180 children who'd been subject to bizarre medical experiments by the camp's sadistic physicians, including the infamous Dr Mengele. There was other evidence, too, of great wrongdoing. The Russians found warehouses filled with personal possessions - suitcases, spectacles, as well seven tons of human hair - all of it once belonging to people who had now vanished, their incinerated remains lost to the wind. How had this nightmarish place come to be, and what, as Bass had wondered, had these people done to deserve this fate?

The first concentration camp in Germany opened in 1933, just 15 days after Hitler came to power. Concentration camps were not new. So-called because they concentrated a large number of prisoners in a confined area, they'd been around since at least 1838 when used by the US government to intern Native Americans, and Germany had used them in Namibia before World War I. The first on home soil, however, was located in a disused factory in Dachau, Bavaria. Originally established to hold 5,000 prisoners deemed a threat to the new regime, it was initially populated by political prisoners. As the Nazi's regime spread, however, they were soon joined by others: gay people, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma, and - from 1935 onwards with the passing of the anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws - a vast number of Jews.

Liberation of the camps

1944

Majdanek Extermination Camp, Poland
The speed of the Soviet advance meant the Nazis had no time to destroy Majdanek. It was the first proof of industrialised killing. It's thought 78,000 perished within its walls. **22nd July 1944**

Belzec Extermination Camp, Poland
Belzec was overrun by the Red Army in the summer of 1944. By this time, however, the camp there had been dismantled, having claimed an estimated 600,000 lives. **July 1944**

Treblinka, Extermination Camp, Poland
One of six extermination camps in the Nazi prison system, Treblinka was also destroyed before the Soviets reached it. As many as 900,000 may have been murdered there. **July 1944**

Sobibor, Extermination Camp, Poland
The Soviets overran the site of this death camp in late summer 1944. The camp had been closed the previous year after a revolt by inmates - approximately 250,000 people were killed there. **August 1944**

Natzweiler-Struthof Concentration Camp, France
Liberated by troops from the US Sixth Army Group. It'd housed 52,000 inmates and witnessed 22,000 murders. SS Major August Hirt kept a 'Jewish skeleton collection' at the camp. **23rd November 1944**

Chelmno Extermination Camp, Poland
Although operational until shortly before the Soviets overran the area, the Nazis again destroyed this death camp to destroy evidence of their crimes. As many as 340,000 were exterminated here. **17th January 1945**

Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Camp, Poland
By far the biggest camp in the Nazi prison system, it was staffed by 7,000 SS troopers. Notable inmates included Anne Frank, novelist Primo Levi, and Nobel Prize-winner Imre Kertész. **27th January 1945**

As war approached, more camps appeared throughout Germany: Sachsenhausen was established in 1936, Buchenwald in 1937, Flossenbürg in 1938, Bergen-Belsen a year later. With the invasion of Poland in September 1939 came access to new land where the Nazis could build even bigger complexes away from the gaze of the German public. It's thought that between 1933 and 1945 the Nazis established around 40,000 camps and incarceration centres. Many were used to simply supply the regime with a huge army of slave labourers, or to detain prisoners of war scooped up in various blitzkriegs. Others like Auschwitz, however, evolved into institutions specifically dedicated to the business of mass murder. Originally constructed in May 1940 for Polish POWs, Auschwitz had soon expanded to house political prisoners and other 'undesirables'. It was initially a labour camp. With the drafting of the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in January 1942, however, when the extermination Europe's Jewish population became official state policy, Auschwitz was transformed into the most notorious killing centre in the concentration-camp system. While gas chambers and crematoria weren't uncommon elsewhere, the vast Auschwitz complex had eight gas chambers and 46 ovens – capable of disposing of 42,000 people a week. It was here that the use of Zyklon B was pioneered. Ushered into gas chambers on the pretext that they were communal shower rooms, inmates were then locked in and the Zyklon B pellets poured in by SS guards through chutes in the wall. These pellets would vaporise when exposed to air, releasing cyanide gas. This highly efficient murder method had been dreamt up by SS Captain Karl Fritzch, deputy to the camp's commander Rudolf Höss, while conducting some experimental executions of Soviet POWs in late August 1941. The discovery of Auschwitz was to prove the most heinous example of how far Hitler's Holocaust had gone, but it wasn't the last. In the months following the camp's liberation, the Soviets overran others in Poland, the Baltic States and eventually in Germany itself. In the West, meanwhile, advancing US forces liberated further German camps. Buchenwald was overrun on 11th April, 1945, resulting in more than 20,000 prisoners being freed. Others followed in quick succession at Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen and Dachau on 29th April. By then it'd borne witness to nearly 32,000 murders.

British forces, meanwhile, liberated camps across northern Germany, including Bergen-Belsen on 5th April 1945. Here they discovered around 60,000 prisoners, most of whom were critically ill due to a typhus epidemic. More than 10,000 of them died within weeks of liberation. Even more tragic, however, was the fate of the prisoners at Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg. On 26th April, about 10,000 inmates were loaded onto four prison ships anchored in Lübeck Bay in the Baltic Sea. On 3rd May, operating under information that they were filled with SS troops bound for Norway, three squadrons of RAF Typhoons attacked the unarmed vessels, sinking three of them. As the terrified survivors tried to swim for shore, the RAF pilots strafed the waters with machine gun fire until all movement ceased. The British troops who rolled in shortly afterwards were greeted by the ghostly sight of what appeared to be thousands of skeletons washing up on the shore. The war that had brought about these horrors came to an end just five days later.

Bergen-Belsen, Concentration Camp, Germany
When liberated, troops from the British 11th Armoured division encountered 13,000 unburied corpses lying around the camp. 50,000 are believed to have died there in total.
15th April 1945

Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, Germany
When it was liberated by the Red Army, just 3,000 inmates remained – the other 33,000 had been forced on a death march by their SS guards just days before.
22nd April 1945

Flossenbürg, Concentration Camp, Germany
Shortly before its liberation, Flossenbürg witnessed a wave of executions. Among the victims were 13 British agents, seven German officers who'd plotted to kill Hitler, and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. **23rd April 1945**

Dachau Concentration Camp, Germany
Just three days before US troops liberated the original Nazi concentration camp, 10,000 of its inmates were forced to march south towards Austria. More than 1,000 died before. **29th April 1945**

Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, Germany
Perhaps as many as 117,000 perished at this camp which housed mostly female inmates, many of them children. Less than 3,500 survivors were discovered by the Red Army upon liberation.
30th April 1945

Neuengamme Concentration Camp, Germany
Liberated by the British, this camp operated an extermination-though-labour policy. Around 42,900 inmates are believed to have succumbed to a mix of hard labour, disease, insufficient nutrition, and inhumane treatment. **4th May 1945**

Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp, Austria
As many as 320,000 may have perished here before the US army liberated it. One survivor was Simon Wiesenthal, who spent the rest of his life hunting Nazi war criminals.
5th May 1945

Stuffhof Concentration Camp, Poland
By the time Soviet forces liberated Stuffhof, just 100 prisoners remained. Many of the 50,000 removed beforehand had been marched to the Baltic Sea, forced into the water and gunned down.
9th May 1945

1945

Bringing the Nazis to justice

The Allies wanted to punish the Nazis for their crimes. The Nuremberg Trials became the greatest court cases in history

In 1943, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin met his British and American counterparts Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt in Iran. The Tehran Conference, as it became known, had been called to discuss how best to defeat Hitler, but the conversation soon turned to vengeance. Stalin proposed that, once the war was won, 50,000-100,000 German staff officers should be executed in retribution for Nazi atrocities. Roosevelt – perhaps only half joking – said that perhaps 49,000 would do.

As the war worsened, this appetite for revenge grew. When it was over, one senior US politician Henry Morgenthau even advocated obliterating Germany's industrial base and sending the country back to the Dark Ages. Others, however, such as US Secretary of War Henry Stimpson, called for a more measured approach. Yes, those responsible must be brought to justice, but they needed to be tried fairly both to demonstrate the importance of the rule of law and create a historical record of the crimes committed.

Stimpson's argument won the day. On 8th May 1945, US President Harry Truman appointed lawyer Robert Jackson as Chief of Counsel. His mission was to get the US, Britain, France and Russia to agree on how such a trial might work, as well as decide who should face prosecution. The trouble was, the scale of the crime was so vast that it eventually became apparent that not everyone involved could possibly face justice. A huge list of those responsible was collated, and although there would be later prosecutions for less well-known Nazis in the military, judiciary and medical professions, the first and most significant case was that brought against the Nazi leadership.

Although many top Nazis, including Hitler and Himmler, were already dead, other kingpins – including Hitler's successor Herman Goring, armaments minister Albert Speer and deputy Führer Rudolf Hess – were in custody. These men, it was decided, would be among the first to answer for the millions of deaths the Nazis had caused. Not that it would be that easy. First, no international court or suitable laws existed at this time. Second, how was guilt to be proved? These leaders may have signed the orders but none had actually pulled a trigger. Once an agreed system

Nuremberg Trials Timeline

1943

Tehran Conference
The Big Three (Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill) meet in the Iranian capital to discuss defeating Hitler. The subject of bringing about post-war criminal proceedings was also on the agenda.
28th November - 1st December, 1943

London Charter
The London Charter of the International Military Tribunal is issued. This decree set down the laws and procedures by which the Nuremberg Trials were to be conducted.
8th August, 1945

The Nuremberg Trials begin
The prosecution's case is put forward by US attorney Robert Jackson in a damning and deeply moving speech which leaves a profound impression on both the court and the public.
20th November, 1945

Jackson's opening speech
In a speech delivered at Harvard University, US Secretary of State George Marshall announces a $13 billion aid package to help Europe recover from the devastation.
21st November, 1945

Pre-meditated aggression is proven
Jackson presents the Hossbach Memorandum – evidence of a pre-war conference at which top Nazis had discussed waging war against Germany's neighbours in order to create greater 'lebensraum' or living space.
26th November, 1945

of trial was worked out, the challenge, then, was to bring a case against them based on complicity. It was case that would eventually be built around what one of Jackson's team – Murray Bernays – called his 'conspiracy theory'. Bernays argued that the Nazi Party was a criminal conspiracy that'd plotted to steal the land of Germany's neighbours, to steal their wealth and to commit racially motivated mass murder. As such, the men who'd issued the orders were ultimately culpable. Accordingly, these individuals could be charged with three categories of crime – waging aggressive war, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It was decided that judges rather than a jury would preside over a military tribunal who'd pass sentence based on the arguments presented by teams both prosecuting and defending the accused. Nuremberg, meanwhile, was selected to host the trials. The city's sports stadium had been the venue of annual Nazi rallies throughout the 1930s and Nuremberg's Palace of Justice was less than five miles away. It was seen as a fitting location to end what had largely been started in a place many considered to be the Nazis' spiritual home. Goring, Speer, Hess and 20 more of Hitler's surviving henchmen were now incarcerated in the court's cellblock as the final preparations were made. Prosecution teams representing Britain, France, the US and the USSR were assembled: Attorney General Hartley Shawcross represented the British, Chempetier de Ribes the French, and General Roman Rudenko the Soviets. It would be Jackson, however, who would lead from the start. Fearing a paucity of evidence he'd initially planned to use a series of witnesses to substantiate his case. But as scrupulously kept records of the Nazi slaughter flooded in he changed tack. With 47 crates of documents, files, and films at his disposal, he began building a meticulous case.

For their part, Goring and co were defended by some of the finest legal minds in Germany. Lawyers immediately went on the attack, questioning the very validity of the main charge – that of 'waging aggressive war.' No state in history had ever faced such an indictment, they argued; there was no juridical basis for the charge. The men in the dock could not be held culpable for state policy, after all they were just following orders passed down to them.

The prosecution countered, arguing that men had committed these crimes, not some faceless, unimpeachable state. Evidence was now produced. Minutes of a secret meeting from 1937 between Hitler and his top advisors showed them discussing the need to expand Germany's borders– a goal that could only be achieved by force. Further documents and witnesses followed, proving that the Nazi high command had plotted to attack Germany's neighbours.. The prosecution then painstakingly traced back a deliberately forged chain of criminal acts: the burning of Germany's parliament – the Reichstag – the crisis that'd allowed the newly elected Hitler to declare martial law; the subsequent clampdown on the Reich's political opponents; the establishment of the concentration camps. Jackson showed how the conspiracy had caused the war to spread throughout Europe, Scandinavia and Russia. He revealed, too, how Germany never declared war, opting instead to break treaties to attack without warning. The defence lawyers responded by producing a mountain of paperwork of their own. It was a tactic designed to drain the moral authority from Jackson's case. Proceedings were slowed down, too, by the judges who – keen to make sure that justice was seen to be done – allowed the defendants almost total freedom of speech. The more eloquent among them, such as Speer, seized the opportunity to charm the court. Others, meanwhile, used it to give sermons on the merits of National Socialism. When the charismatic Goring was given the floor, he delivered a rabble-rousing diatribe that went on for two and half days. Although Jackson had been keen to avoid sensationalism, when the Nazi defendants began to hijack the headlines, he called on key witnesses whose testimonies would once and for all damn those in the dock. The stand was now busy with those who'd carried out the orders of the accused – concentration camp thugs, extermination squad psychos, gas-chamber murderers. Their evidence shocked the world. The trial continued for 11 long months until on 1st September 1946, the court adjourned for the tribunal judges to consider all of the evidence.

A month later, verdicts were given and sentences passed. Of the 22 surviving defendants (one had committed suicide) 11 – including Goring – were condemned to death, nine were given sentences of between ten years and life, while three were acquitted. With all appeals refused, the executions were set for the night of 16th October. By going after the Nazi leadership, Jackson had established a precedent that stands even to this day – that all humanity would be guarded by an international legal shield ,and even a head of state could be held criminally responsible for their aggression and crimes against humanity. Goring, however, would remain defiant to the last. The night before his execution, the swaggering aristocrat swallowed cyanide that had been smuggled into his cell. He was found dead on his bunk the next morning, dressed in blue silk pyjamas.

“‘The prosecution argued that the Nazi Party had plotted to steal from Germany's neighbours and commit racially motivated mass murder”

Death squad leader testifies
Otto Ohlendorf – the former head of the mobile SS paramilitary death squad Einsatzgruppe D – is put on the stand. He casually admits to having overseen the shooting of around 90,000 Jews.
3rd January, 1946

Holocaust survivor testifies
Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier takes to the stand to give testimony. The former French resistance fighter had been imprisoned at Auschwitz where she'd witnessed the genocide of both Roma Gypsies and Jews.
28th January, 1946

Herman Goring takes the stand
Hitler's former right-hand man insists he's merely a military man who'd followed orders, that he isn't anti-Semitic and that he'd had no control over the actions of others.
13-22nd March, 1946

Albert Speer takes the stand
As armaments minister, Speer had used 400,000 slave labourers to reach his production targets, thousands of whom had died. Sensing that contrition might save his life, Speer atones.
20th June, 1946

Nimitz Affidavit
Admiral Dönitz, whose U-boats had terrorised shipping in the Atlantic, presents an affidavit from America's Admiral Nimitz that the US Navy had used identical tactics in the Pacific against Japan.
2nd July, 1946

Verdicts given
The verdicts are given over two days. The trials' findings form the basis of the Nuremberg Principles drafted in 1950. These set out guidelines for criminal culpability under international law.
30th September - 1st October, 1946

Sentencing is passed
Goring is sentenced to death. Speer escapes with a 20-year sentence, while Dönitz gets just 10 years. Hess gets life imprisonment. He dies in Berlin's Spandau Prison 41 years later.
1st October, 1946

Executions
On the temporary gallows in the court's gymnasium the executions are botched; necks don't break immediately. Von Ribbentrop takes 17 minutes to die, General Jodl 18, Field Marshall Keitel 28.
16th October, 1946

Doctors Trial
Part of the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials, this successfully prosecuted 16 Nazi who'd been involved with human experimentation and mass murder under the guise of euthanasia. Seven defendants were subsequently executed.
9th December, 1946 - 20th August, 1947

Judges Trial
Also part of the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials, the defendants in this case were 16 judiciary officials responsible for implementing the Nazis' eugenic and race laws – 10 of whom were successfully prosecuted.
5th March - 4th December 1947

1947

ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

How the defeat of Nazi Germany created a new world order and ushered in an even more dangerous era...

The Nazi movement's last showdown came in May 1945, when the Soviet Army finally crushed it during the Battle of Berlin. It was one of the costliest encounters of WWII, claiming 1.3 million casualties in just nine days of fighting. Before it was even over, however, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was already plotting to attack his ally – the USSR – and drive its vast army out of Eastern Europe. Operation Unthinkable – as he codenamed his plan – even sought to rope in what remained of Germany's army to ensure victory. 'A tide of Russian domination is sweeping forward,' wrote Churchill. 'After the war is over, the territories under Russian control will include the Baltic provinces, all of eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, a large part of Austria, the whole of Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria. It's to a showdown with Russia that we must now turn our hopes.' The attack was planned for 1st July 1945. On 23rd May, however, Churchill was obliged to call a general election. Perhaps fortunately, it was an election he didn't win. Operation Unthinkable was, of course, top secret, but by 1945 the Russians had so successfully infiltrated British Intelligence that the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin knew all about it. Indeed, by the time of the Potsdam Conference of July-August 1945 – which was intended to sort out the shape of post-war Europe – the Allied nations that had defeated Nazism were already splitting into two factions: the capitalist governments of Britain and the US on one side, and Russia's communist regime on the other. At a previous conference in Yalta in February 1945, Stalin had agreed to free elections in lands his army had occupied across Eastern Europe. Suspicious about his allies' intentions, however, he now reneged on his word. The USSR needed 'friendly states' on its Western borders, he insisted. After all, hadn't Russia been dragged into the war when former ally Nazi Germany had invaded the country without warning? Moscow would therefore

> "'An iron curtain has descended across the continent,' Churchill declared the following year. It was a phrase that would stick"

Cold War Origins Timeline

1945

The Potsdam Conference
Britain's new PM Clement Atlee, the US President Truman and the USSR's Marshal Stalin meet on the outskirts of Berlin to discuss how post-war Europe is to be organised.
**17th July–
2nd August, 1945**

Korea divided
The Korean Peninsula is split along the 38th Parallel as Soviet troops drive imperial Japanese forces out of the north of the country, while the US invades from the south.
10th August,1945

Kennan's containment telegram
Diplomat George Kennan's 'Long Telegram' from Moscow advocates a policy of containment against the USSR stating that the US should, 'regard the Soviet Union as a rival'.
22nd February, 1946

Churchill's iron curtain speech
'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent,' Churchill tells an audience in Fulton, Missouri. The phrase becomes a Cold War trope.
5th May, 1946

The Marshall Plan
In a speech delivered at Harvard University, US Secretary of State George Marshall announces a $13 billion aid package to help Europe recover from the devastation of WWII.
1st January, 1946

The Truman Doctrine
In a speech remembered as the Truman Doctrine, the US's President Truman pledges American assistance to any nation threatened by Communism, establishing the containment theory as policy.
5th June, 1947

Berlin blockade begins
After the US, UK and France effectively unite their three zones of occupation by introducing a common currency (the Deutsche Mark) the Soviets sever road and rail access into Berlin.
24th June, 1948

The Berlin Airlift
The US launches Operation Vittles – aka the 11 month-long Berlin Airlift. Planes supply the west side of the city day and night for nearly a year.
**26th June, 1948 –
30th September, 1949**

install communist governments in Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, while occupying East Germany – as agreed at Yalta – with the rest of the country divided up into separate zones controlled by Britain, France and the US. The Grand Alliance that had won the war was now dead. 'An iron curtain has descended across the continent,' Churchill famously declared the following year, describing the irreconcilable rift between the capitalist West and the communist East that now existed.

It was a phrase that would stick. Churchill's comments made public what the Western Allies had already discussed in private. In February 1946, George Kennan, a US diplomat in Moscow, had sent a telegram to Washington arguing for a 'containment policy' towards Russia. Kennan insisted that the USSR was determined to extend its influence around the world – its oppression of the Ukrainian nationalist movement and imposed puppet governments were evidence enough of this. Its leaders, though, were risk-averse. When faced with determined opposition, particularly from the US – he claimed – they would back down.

The earliest test of this theory came in spring 1946 when a communist insurgency took on the British-backed government in Greece, just as Turkey was coming under increasing diplomatic and economic pressure to allow the Soviet navy access to the Mediterranean. Previously, Britain would simply have flexed its imperial muscles, but six years of war had left the country bankrupt and its Empire crumbling. So it was left to America to play the role of world policeman. Within a year, US president Harry S Truman had secured $400 million from Congress in military and economic aid for Greece and Turkey, after citing the US commitment to backing free peoples against armed aggressors or outside pressures. This policy, which became known as the Truman Doctrine, appeared to work. By October 1949 the Greek communists were defeated while Turkey's economy was strong enough to resist Russia's overtures. Although the defeat of Hitler brought peace to Europe, it had left the continent in chaos. It smashed infrastructure and created continuing hardships that now fuelled support for the communist cause as people, especially in Italy and France, called for a fairer distribution of national wealth.

The US, keen to smother communism and smelling the opportunity to make a buck, came up with the Marshall Plan. Named after US Secretary of State George C Marshall, who devised it, it saw America channel $13 billion into 18 war-ravaged economies between 1948 and 1951. This significantly accelerated the reconstruction of Western Europe, creating jobs and new markets for American-made goods in the process. A similar offer of aid was made to countries under the USSR's sphere of influence. Unsurprisingly, it was turned down. In June 1948, the bizarre game of tit-for-tat that came to characterise the Cold War took a new twist, when Britain, France, and the US began merging their zones of occupation into the unified state of West Germany. Stalin responded by blocking all access to Berlin, which although it was deep inside the Russian zone, had been similarly divided into four sectors by the wartime allies. Stalin's aim was to either force the Western powers to end their plan to unify West Germany, or leave Berlin. Truman now ordered a massive airlift to supply the 2 million Berliners under Anglo-French and American control, and an armada of aircraft flooded the city with food, clothing, and fuel. As a further show of strength, he also sent B-29 bombers, the only planes then capable of carrying an atomic bomb, to bases in Britain. Outmanoeuvred, the Russians lifted the blockade in May 1949, having achieved nothing except to further exacerbate an increasingly precarious situation. By now the West had firmly closed ranks against its former ally. In April 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was formed, creating a new military alliance between the US, Canada and 10 other European countries. It was clearly a bulwark intended to contain the USSR and when the old enemy (West) Germany was invited to join the club in 1955, Moscow responded by forming the Warsaw Pact – a military alliance with the countries under its control. The Cold War was rapidly taking on global proportions. As had been agreed at Yalta, the USSR had declared war on imperial Japan in the dying days of WWII. Its troops had then driven the Japanese out of the northern Korean Peninsula while US troops had liberated the south. By 1948, though, the tensions between the USSR and the US saw Korea effectively split into two separate regions – the communist-run People's Democratic Republic of Korea, north of the 38th Parallel, and the US-supported Republic of Korea to its south. Both sides claimed governmental legitimacy and in June 1950 things hit crisis point when the North Korean army marched south.

May 1945, American and Soviet soldiers meet in Germany as the Nazi regime collapses. Little did they suspect that they'd soon be enemies

Under the flag of the newly created United Nations, the US sent a mighty force to fight the North Koreans, who were backed by Mao Zedong's new communist regime in China. By the time the conflict ended in 1953, more than 1.5 million US troops had served in a war that ended not in peace but with an uneasy truce that still stands to this day. The border was re-established almost exactly where it had been three years before and here, as was happening elsewhere around the globe, an almighty stare-down between two incompatible political systems would now dominate for decades.

NATO is formed
The US and Canada join 10 European allies in a formal anti-Soviet military alliance that extends the deterrent threat of the US's nuclear weapons to cover Western Europe.
4th April, 1949

First Soviet A-bomb
The USSR successfully tests its first atomic bomb at Semipalatinsk desert in Kazakhstan, its nuclear programme having been greatly aided by its network of atomic spies.
29th August, 1949

China becomes Communist
After years of fighting, Mao Zedong's Communist forces finally defeat the Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek. The latter flees to Taiwan where he sets up a US-recognised government in exile.
1st October, 1949

East Germany founded
In response to the formation of West Germany, the USSR declares the formation of the German Democratic Republic under the rigid leadership of a German communist named Walter Ulbricht.
7th October, 1949

Chinese-Soviet Alliance formed
Chinese leader Chairman Mao Zedong visits Joseph Stalin in Moscow to negotiate an alliance between the Soviet Union and China. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance is then signed.
14th February, 1950

North Korea attacks South Korea
North Korean troops cross the 38th Parallel to 'liberate' the southern part of the peninsular from the anti-communist government under Syngman Rhee in Seoul.
25th June, 1950

US troops sent to South Korea
The newly formed United Nation's Security Council recommends that all UN forces sent to Korea be put under US command. 90 per cent of all the soldiers who serve in the conflict are American.
7th July, 1950

1950

STORY OF WORLD WAR II

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